Papers on the Church

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Presbyterianism

Tested by the Word of God

A letter to the Editor of “The British Herald.”

Note

This letter to Mr. Reid is a brief but perhaps sufficient answer to three articles (entitled “Rule in the Church,” “Local Charges” and “Power the Ground of Office,”) in the British Herald for April 1, 1870.

Nothing call be more unfounded in principle or in fact than Mr. R.’s note to the May Herald (p. 78), in which the impression is given that “Brethren” imply “something very like a mistake” in the apostolic choice of elders. Not so: it is our conviction of God’s wisdom in this which compels us to reject as unauthorised and anti-scriptural either Prelatic or Presbyterian appointment of elders. But it is impossible to choose them scripturally without apostles or their delegates. Let those who will, dare to imply a mistake that apostles were not perpetuated, on whose authority, living authority, direct or indirect, the choice of elders depends according to Scripture: we adore the God who provides all that is needful for a day of ruin without endorsing false pretensions.

Presbyterianism,

Dear brother, — In general, as you know, “Brethren” do not answer attacks made on them, unless they afford a good occasion for stating the truth. I am bound to add that your allusion cannot be rightly viewed as an attack, but rather as a defence of your own position. Suffer me,

however, to send a few words which may remove misapprehension as to ourselves, if they do not convince you of what I believe to be mistaken on your part.

There has never been a time when “Brethren,” as represented by those competent to speak for them, did not hold the perpetuity of all the gifts needed by the saints and given in Christ’s love; and among the rest of pastors or rulers, Not an article, tract, pamphlet, or book has ever emanated from their midst, so far as I know (and I know them long and extensively), which does not insist on the value of rule in the church, if they treat of ministry at all. I have known strange doctrines elsewhere compromising the truth — never among such as possess the confidence of “Brethren” Individuals have shown a tendency, one to clericalism, another to democratic spirit; but it would be disingenuous to confound the mistakes of a few (whether among teachers or among taught) with the genuine working and effects of their distinctive principle, which I consider to be the return and recall of Christ’s members to the word and Spirit of God, from the actual disorganisation of Christendom in which His sheep are scattered by Popery, Nationalism, and Dissent.

From rule in the church, then, which we all accept cordially (provided, of course, it be of God and not a mere name or a cheat), I turn to local charges. Here you concede that apostles chose the elders according to Scripture. It is equally clear that the people never chose them — none ever did but an apostle, or an apostolic delegate expressly commissioned so to do. We have no controversy with you as to the plurality of elders, or their identity with overseers; but we are sure that Episcopacy is not more at issue with Scripture in setting

up a class of men (call them bishops or what not, who claim to perpetuate the ordaining power of the apostles) than Presbyterianism or Congregationalism in substituting popular election for the apostolic choice of elders.

It is acknowledged by all well-informed Presbyterians that the earliest authentic documents after the apostles demonstrate the existence of the Episcopal system, as it is confessed that this prevailed in the Catholic world, till Rome crowned the incubus with the papal tiara. In vain do Congregational or Presbyterian controversialists invoke the testimonies of such fathers as Cyprian or Jerome: Episcopacy (though of a city, rather than of a diocese, at first) is a fact patent from the beginning of the second century. We hear of a bishop, of presbyters, and of deacons, in the same church from Ignatius, even if we use the shorter Syriac to correct the larger Greek copies. It is in vain then to say that you were “born in the apostolic place.” Not so: we have all been born out of it. Eighteen centuries ago, “the Church-train” left the rails. The Reformation was a greet work; but there was no return to the original apostolic line — none even in the theory of Presbyterianism, still less of revolutionary Congregationalism.

And the error lies far deeper than an informal appointment of presbyters. The sub-apostolic fathers and their successors, you will not deny, evince a complete ignorance of the church’s character and calling, as well as of the Holy Spirit’s presence and action in it. So did Luther, Calvin, John Knox, and John Owen. Hence from first to last the clerical system is seen in operation, i.e., the confusion of Christ’s gifts with the local charges (even if duly appointed, which

they never were by any of these), which confined preaching in the church to the bishop of old, or “the minister” among moderns. He might by courtesy permit others to minister, but he only had the title. Such was and is the prevalent system of a clergy, from which Presbyterianism is no more free than other sects, in open war with the Christian assembly as seen in Scripture and carried out everywhere among “Brethren.” It is evident, then, that the “Church-train” had disastrously slipped aside (not “shunted” but slipped) from the rails laid down in Scripture.

Calvin and his fellows, who thought they gathered Presbyterianism from Scripture, never pretended that they were “born in the apostolic place,” but turned their back on Episcopacy as a deviation from Scripture, though it had lasted for more than a thousand years. They tried to distinguish between ministry and eldership, but really fell into the Presbyterian notion of two classes of elders, the one ruling and the other teaching. You rightly call this a “mistake;” but is it not a mistake to which you are bound in subscribing the Westminster Confession of Faith? Calvin and Knox never had their eyes opened, as yours have been, to the momentous truth of God’s assembly on earth with the Spirit, free to act by whom He will among Christ’s members in the exercise of gift, thanksgiving, prayer, etc. Something resembling this you have essayed at the Lord’s Supper of each Lord’s day at Warwick Road; but how it is to be reconciled with the plain honesty of a Presbyterian minister and members has always been a pain more than a marvel to me. I do not say to you or any other, Come to us; but I affirm that you are bound in the Lord’s name to cease from all evil, to avoid even its

appearance, counting on His future guidance when you stand clear of all you know to be an unscriptural bond and ground-work.

Agreeing with you that “Christendom is in rebellion” (which is surely serious for the “Church-train”), I hold with you that rule abides no less than preaching and teaching. But I ask: are Presbyterian elders chosen spiritually? If not, is this nothing? or is it part of the “rebellion?” And what of the place given to “the minister?” Is it more scriptural than an Anglican bishop? Does either honour the Lord’s order? “Brethren” hold that, though we may lack much of apostolic order, we are never at liberty to contravene it. What can more flatly contradict Scripture than letting the people choose their elders, who in Scripture were invariably chosen by apostles or their delegates? If Scripture allowed this either to the assembly or to ordinary gifted men, “Brethren”, could and would use the like liberty. But they find in Scripture principles irreconcilable with either; and to it the authority of the Lord binds them to adhere, as did the Christians in early days, when no apostle or apostolic envoy visited to choose them elders. Call this “naked” if you will; but we can prove that this has the sanction of God’s word, as readily as we can disprove the self- will of allowing the people, or an Anglican bishop, to choose presbyters. All that can be done by either is to clothe with the livery of a sect; whereas the value of appointment in Scripture depends on its being of the Lord through His apostles. If not the true Scriptural authority, we are convinced it is worse than nothing, for it is really an act of “rebellion,” — even though those who do it ignorantly may be His

servants. How much better to confess our wants than to hide them by a pretentious fiction!

Do “Brethren,” therefore, undermine rule in the Church? Are they thereby destitute of rulers? In no way. Have you observed that many (yea most) of the inspired Epistles of the apostle Paul suppose rulers, but not elders in them? So at Rome, where ruling is enjoined (ch. 12), but not a word about an elder. How could there be elders where none had as yet gone competent to choose them? They had rulers like “Brethren;” but like them they had no elders. — It was not otherwise at Corinth, where their presence is ignored, though the Apostles had formed the assembly there. This is not surprising to us, but inexplicable to a Presbyterian. It was not the apostolic way to appoint elders in an infant assembly, but rather in places where churches already existed, and some exhibited the qualities required in overseers or elders. — In the assemblies of Galatia we hear of no elders; but we cannot doubt that some ruled, as we know they taught from the apostolic command that the saints should communicate with those who taught them in all good things. — There were not gifts only but elders at Ephesus, which had enjoyed the apostle’s stay there for a considerable time, after an earlier stage of less light and power. — At Colosse both fact and principle point to an absence of elders; while it is certain that the church at Philippi had overseers.

But at Thessalonica we see how false the assumption is, that we cannot have men over us in the Lord without elders. Not that apostolically chosen elders were not a great boon locally, as apostles were yet more universally; but it is a fallacy to teach or fancy that we cannot walk in holy obedience and recognition of rulers

without the presence of either. At Thessalonica those over the saints were clearly not invested with the charge of eldership, yet the saints there had rule then, as "Brethren" now. Apostolic order neither taunted them as "naked," nor admitted of election by the people to clothe them with authority. This I should call democracy, the fruit of "liberty, equality, and fraternity," which "Brethren" dislike more than any other Christians that I know.

It would seem too that, in writing to Jews, the Apostle purposely employed the phrase οἱ ἡγουμένοι in Heb. 13:7, 17, 24, to embrace all who exercised pastoral care, whether "elders" or not. Compare Acts 15:22, where it is applied to two "prophets" (not "elders"), and is translated "chief men." The true deduction from all this, compared with 1st and 2nd Tim. and Titus, I consider both plain and as decidedly in favour of "Brethren," as it is adverse to Presbyterianism and every other denomination. Among the Jewish believers we do not read of any formal installation of "elders," who are first named in Acts 11:30.

On the one hand, then, scripture speaks of the people choosing men to take care of the poor (Acts 6, 2 Corinthians 8)1 — never of elders chosen save by apostles or their delegates. "Brethren" could as easily as others choose; but they could no more than Presbyterians confer the scriptural authority of elders which apostles did (directly or indirectly); but after all they are no worse off in this than many chief churches for some time, many probably always, in apostolic times. Presbyterians, on the other hand, like the rest, have never been "on the rails" of Scripture in this respect, of which they nevertheless are apt to boast. I see no

“shunting” in our case, any more than in the assemblies at Rome, Corinth, Colosse, and Thessalonica. But I do see an upset of the scriptural system in Presbyterianism, not of elders merely, but of ministry, of the assembly itself, and of the sovereign action of the Holy Spirit in the assembly.

I have now, I trust, said enough to raise grave inquiries in grave minds; and to God and the word of His grace I would commend you and your readers, desiring only His will to stand. He is the best judge of the church’s need, and the only wise and adequate provider for it. He abstained from perpetuating an ordaining authority where the departure from His truth was such that He must thereby have given an outward sanction to His own dishonour. He does vouchsafe all that is needful, but in such a way as to exercise faith in all, and to convict of disorder those most of all who pique themselves on names and shadows without reality. Ever yours in the Lord, W Kelly.

1 It would be a wrong to Paul and Barnabas to rank them as mere ἀποστολοι ἐκκλησιῶν (“messengers of the churches”) entrusted with supplies for poor saints. They are called οἱ ἀποστολοι (“the apostles”) twice over, not Paul only but Barnabas also, in the same chapter which records their choice of elders. (See Acts 14:4, 14, 23.) Elders never chose elders, though the apostle associated them with his own laying on of hands when he communicated a gift, χάρισμα, to Timothy, who was an evangelist, not an elder.

Unity of the Church in Inspired History

Unity According To The Apostle John

The great truth and privilege of unity appears prominently in the Gospel of John and in the Epistles of Paul; but it is viewed in a different way by these two eminent servants of the Lord, by each subordinately to the purpose which the inspiring Spirit of God had in the work given them respectively to do. In the writings of both, unity supposes and is based on the Lord's death, as in the gospel of grace and in the church of God. Without the accomplishment of redemption as well as the incarnation not one of these things could be. Every intelligent believer knows what a place the apostle of the Gentiles was led to assign to the work of the cross, whereby God was glorified, the door opened to Gentiles no less freely than to Jews, and the mystery of Christ and the church came into view. But it is no less plain in the Gospel of John, which only the present paper contemplates, though its main scope undoubtedly is to set forth Christ's personal glory, and the mission of the Holy Spirit to be here in His own on His departure to heaven.

Hence in John 10 the Lord explains His giving His life, as the Good Shepherd, for the sheep, in contrast with both the thief and the hireling (vers. 10-13). His laying down His life for the sheep He repeats in ver. 15 before He speaks of His other sheep, 1 not of this fold" (Judaism), but believers from among the Gentiles, whom also He must bring, as hearing His voice; "and

there shall be one flock, one Shepherd" (ver. 16). Here is in this Gospel the first explicit announcement of unity for the flock answering to the one Shepherd. It is due to His glory and His love, to His person and His work. They are His own sheep, they hear His voice. To Him the porter opens, as He only is the Shepherd, Who calls them by name and leads them out. For He disowns the enclosure now condemned, that once had divine sanction; and when He put forth all His own, He goes before them, and the sheep follow Him. He is thus their way, protection, and warrant. A stranger they will not follow. It is not that they know every snare; but they know His voice (either in Himself or in whomsoever He speaks), not the voice of strangers. How simple and secure for him who hears!

Plain and all-important as this was, for it is the introduction of Christianity, it was a dark proverb when first spoken. "They understood not what things they were which he spoke to them." So it was when even before His Galilean ministry He spoke of raising up the temple of His body (John 2:19-22). This the resurrection cleared up much, the coming of the Spirit what remained. But He adds a new and deeper figure with the utmost solemnity; He was "the door," not of the fold, not of Israel, but "of the sheep." All that claimed them before He pronounces thieves and robbers. Are not all since yet more blasphemously guilty? How awful for either! For the Father has given all execution of judgment to the Son on Whose rights they encroach, Whose title they in effect deny, as those that honour Him honour the Father also. The sheep hear Him, not these pretenders; and He is the door, so that if anyone enter in (for it is sovereign grace), he shall be saved, and shall go

in and shall go out, and shall find pasture. By Him (not the law) are salvation, liberty, and food. In contrast with the thief who comes to steal, kill, and destroy, Christ came that the sheep might have life, yea abundantly in Himself risen. What can hinder Him and His grace to His own?

Thus He presents Himself as the Good Shepherd, and His laying down His life for the sheep as its exercise and proof, in contrast with the hireling, whose own the sheep are not, seeing the wolf's approach, leaving the sheep, and fleeing; so that the wolf seizes and scatters them. Far from self He cares to the uttermost for the sheep, and repeats His gracious title (14), declaring their mutual knowledge according to the knowledge the Father had of Him and He of the Father, saying again, He lays down His life for the sheep. This introduces the Gentile sheep, who could not consistently with the divine ways be brought in, and form with the Jewish ones "one flock," till He died, rose, and ascended to heaven. Here however the Lord, though revealing and reiterating His devotedness in dying for His sheep, speaks with the authority of His person according to divine counsels. Nor is there a passage in scripture which more definitely claims the "one flock" for dependence on Himself, or which excludes more peremptorily the pretensions of men to appropriate this place of His, the only competent and worthy One, the centre of all.

Not for a moment is it overlooked that, in restoring Peter from his distressing fall, He made its completeness evident before chosen witnesses by charging him to feed His lambs, to shepherd or tend and feed the sheep. Nor again does one forget that the ascended Christ gave

gifts to men, not apostles and prophets only as the foundation (Eph. 2, Eph. 4), but evangelists, and shepherds and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, etc., till we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God. But He has in no way abnegated His own relations because He gives and sustains subordinates, each in his place to serve and do His will as laid down in His word. Nor is any notion less worthy than to relegate the “one flock, one Shepherd” only to the future and heaven. It is here that we need to recognise both, as He recognises them. It is now that the enemy subtily and persistently and everywhere tempts the saints to give up the truth of the relationship as a present fact, and the responsibility it involves on us to walk faithfully in accordance. It is revealed to act on our faith and practice as we are on the earth. In heaven by-and-by there will be no question, for that which is perfect will have come.

In John 11:51, 52 is the next reference. Here it is the comment of the Holy Spirit on the words of Caiaphas to the Jewish council, not in parabolic form like our Lord’s in John 10, but in terms void of figure. “Now this he said not of himself (ἀφ᾽ ἑαυτοῦ); but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but that he should also gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.”

More than one weighty truth denied in Christendom we find here unambiguously. To the cynical sentiment of the wicked high priest God gave a turn of incomparable grace. Its adoption in apostate unbelief by the Jews in the politic sense of Caiaphas was the ruin of their place and their nation by the Romans. By-and-by mercy will

prevail according to the oath sworn to Abraham, glorying over judgment. Jesus died for the nation, not to gather it into the church as some vainly imagine, nor assuredly to make it an object of irreversible woe like the Babylon of the seven hills, but to save and bless Israel as such at the end and for ever, beyond all that was ever tasted at the beginning under David and Solomon. For He Who died for them will come and reign over them, an infinitely greater than either (to cite a few decisive proofs, Isa. 4:2-6, Isa. 9:7, 8, Isa. 11).

But He should die, said the Spirit, for another purpose wholly distinct, and about to receive its accomplishment in the very near future while He sits at God's right hand on high. The virtue of His death was then to be shown in the new and wondrous work of gathering together in one the scattered children of God. Till Jesus died and went to heaven and sent down the Holy Spirit, nothing of the kind was known or could exist. In Judaism as established of God provisionally (and He had no religious dealings of a public nature elsewhere), no such gathering was thought of. It was an elect nation responsible to be governed by His law; and they were bound to separation from all other nations. There He dwelt Who brought them forth from Egypt to this end, Jehovah their Lord.

Now that the Jews rejected Him, Who was not Messiah only but God, His death (their awful sin) became in God's ways the basis of an entirely different and an incomparably "better thing," the gathering together in one of God's scattered children. It is the church undoubtedly, but not viewed as "one body" which was revealed elsewhere. It is family union, in the closest connection with life eternal, the special truth prominent

throughout the Gospel and the Epistles of John, the groundwork of communion with the Father and the Son, as we find explicitly there.

Severance between the Gentile believers and the Jewish was therein intolerable. Yet before the cross the barrier, it is notorious, subsisted as God's actual order; and Jesus while yet alive in flesh charged the twelve, saying, Go not into a way of the nations, enter not into any city of the, Samaritans. Risen from the dead, He expressly bids them disciple all the nations. For the children of God were to be gathered in virtue of His death into one, they "one flock," as He "one Shepherd." Fleshly distinctions, and outward ordinances, vanished away before the infinite efficacy of that death which blotted out the sins of all believers in the gospel, and by the grace which united them. John 15 is not here alleged; because in the teaching of the Vine and its branches the Lord does not set forth our oneness with Himself, but our need of dependence continual on Him in order to bear fruit. The necessity of communion with Him practically is the point, not the privilege of union.

But it is in John 17, where this great truth of family union has its fullest expression. And no wonder; for it is the Son pouring out His heart's desires about His own to the Father before His departure. There are three occasions in our Lord's utterance where oneness is asked for His saints, and each of these has its own distinctive character.

First, in ver. 11 He says, "Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one as we." It is for those who then surrounded Him (as is certain from vers. 12, etc.), about to preach, teach, and

act with apostolic authority when, Himself gone on high, the new work of God had to see the light as the witness of Christ here below. He is not content with requesting that, as He was taking a new position as the glorified Man in heavenly glory, in virtue of His person and of His work (1-5), they might share it as far as could be, both before the Father (6-13) and before the world (14-21); He asks that in this they might be "one," further adding "even as we." This goes wonderfully far in His demand on the Father. And it was wonderfully answered in that unity of mind and purpose, of word and deed, of heart and service which characterised that holy band. Where and when was there anything to compare with it at any epoch before or since? It is the more striking in the twelve; for we heard of their marked differences, and their mutual jealousies, (alas! how like other saints and other servants of the Lord in all ages), which the presence of the Lord only checked but in no way excluded, as the Gospels faithfully tell us. See the same men when the Holy Spirit was given: how their words and ways by His power only evinced the activities and affections of the life they had in Christ! "Peter standing up with the eleven," they were now truly one. If the multitude of those that believed could be and is said to be of one heart and one soul, and earthly possessions only gave occasion for love, still more emphatically was it true of those God set first in the church."

Secondly, in ver. 20, 21 the Lord makes request not for these only, but also for those who believe on Him (Christ) through their word. This enlarges the sphere, and embraces the mass of the saints following, who received the gospel in the love of the truth. Here therefore, anticipating the world-wide testimony and its

rich results, He says “that they may all be one, as thou Father [art] in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou didst send me.” It is not at all so simple and absolute as in the first case, where divine power wrought to secure an end so all-important. The vast range of their mission was an astonishing witness to the grace that operated in the face of every hindrance, but the effect of the power was attenuated ere long and never so complete. It is the unity of grace, of Christians in the Father and the Son (“one in us “), rising above obstacles within and without through the power of what was revealed and of Him Who made the blessing theirs: to the world, which had known them so different in every way and now beheld them “one,” a testimony far mightier than miracles however striking and numerous. And so it runs, “that the world may believe that thou didst send me.” For this was what sounded out in every place-that the Father sent the Son as Saviour of the world, themselves its living example in their measure, all prejudice notwithstanding.

Thirdly, “the glory which thou hast given me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one, that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them even as thou lovedst me.” Here, though the Lord gave the title then, He looks on to the glory and the glory displayed to the world. It is oneness in that day, and is a character without alloy, quite answering to that of the new Jerusalem in Rev. 21, where the world beholds the glory of the heavenly city, the Bride or Lamb’s wife; not the mutuality of grace as now, but the order of glory, Christ in the glorified saints, and the Father in Christ. Hence then only will they be

“perfected into one;” and then only will the world “know” that the Father sent the Son. For how else could those who were once sinners be in heavenly glory but by His Son sent for their salvation? How else, that the Father loved them even as He loved the Son, but by their manifestation with Him in glory? It is now a question of the world’s “believing;” in that day the world will “know,” because it will see the glory in which Christ and the church will shine together.

Unity In The Pauline Epistles

It is however in the Epistles of the apostle to the Gentiles that we find fuller light, where unity rises (beyond the union of God’s children however sure, sweet, and blessed, as seen in John’s testimony), into the truths of God’s habitation, and Christ’s body. To be built together is close indeed; to be constituted an organic body, the one body of Christ, is yet more, the closest unity possible. Let us trace this new thing to His praise.

In the Epistle to the Romans unity is applied practically, after the gospel of God has been elaborately set forth in Rom. 1 - 8 and God’s sovereign grace to all is in Rom. 9 - 11 conciliated with His special promises to Israel. The saints are exhorted to present their bodies a living sacrifice, not conformed to this age, nor with high thoughts but sobriety. “For as in one body we have many members, yet all the members have not the same function” (thus communion is taught, each fulfilling his own place in the one body, but not exceeding his measure), “so we the many are one body in Christ and severally members one of another.”

Thus, in this Epistle as in all the N.T. and in the nature of things, God does not fail to make it evident that it is for

the individual to repent and believe. We are reconciled to God and justified individually. Before the body of Christ was formed or revealed, the believer had through His blood the remission of sins, and was a son of God by faith in Christ Jesus. The work of redemption was now accomplished; Christ had taken His seat at God's right hand; and the Holy Spirit came down to baptise all who received the gospel into one body, and to dwell in them as God's house. Then and there was the church of God formed. "The Lord was adding day by day such as should be saved together" (Acts 2:47); and this united body was in due time called "the church" (Acts 5:11).

The saints who believed through grace were no longer left as of old among their brethren after the flesh (Mal. 3:16), however slowly they gave up habits and prejudices. They had now "their own company" (Acts 4:23), outside Israel and of course the Gentiles. Their hearts, their prayers, their praises, rose up to God and His Anointed, Whose bondmen they were, bought with a price, and therefore to glorify God in their body. They were taken out of Israel and brought into the body of Christ by the uniting power of the Holy Spirit before they could explain its nature and character. But His descent they knew well, and that they had received Him. It was for Paul in due time to interpret the result and even to reveal it as bound up with Christ, given to be Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. The presence of the Spirit sent from heaven was their bond that made them one body, not their faith nor yet life which they had antecedently as individuals. They were no longer children of God scattered abroad, but gathered together in one; no longer invisible as units in the midst of the

outwardly chosen people, but a corporate body on earth one with their Head in heaven, and as distinct from Jew as from Gentile (1 Cor. 10:32).

In 1 Cor. 12 the apostle, before writing to the Roman saints, had discussed the constitutive principle on the side of the Holy Spirit's presence and action in the church, in the course of which the truth is stated as much above the Reformed systems or those who dissented from them, as above the ancient and so called catholic claims of Greece, Rome, or any others. His was the power that wrought in all the gifts varied as they ware, some of which the Corinthians were singling out for ostentation, all of them given to exalt the Lord Jesus. That love, a way still more excellent, must animate and direct each in order to a right exercise of any gift is clearly shown in 1 Cor. 13; and that power is to be subject to the Lord's authority in the regulation of all is the aim of 1 Cor. 14.

In these distinct manifestations then the same Spirit distributes, the same Lord is served, the same God effectuates, by each for common profit. For as the one body has many members, and the many members are one body: so also, he boldly says, is "the Christ," the body and Head. How truly then is it "one body in Christ!" Of this unity the Holy Spirit now given and present is the power. "For also [besides working in each] in virtue of one Spirit were we all baptised into one, body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and we were all given to drink of one Spirit" (13). It is not new birth, still less water baptism, but the effect of the Spirit given when Jesus was glorified.

But in the body are many members, not one merely. The lower are as essential as the higher (15, 16). All are proper to the body; and God set the members each one of them in the body as it pleased Him. How blessed and conclusive to faith! “But if they all were one member, where the body? But now [they are] many members, yet one body;” and the superior cannot do without the humbler members: all have need of each other (21). Pride is as out of place as discontent. Nay, those that seem weaker are “necessary,” rather than the higher (22); and the less honourable we clothe with more abundant honour, and our uncomely have more abundant comeliness” (23). “God tempered the body together, so that there might be no schism in the body” (24, 25). Hence if one member suffer, all suffer together; if one is honoured, all rejoice (26). Such is the true organisation of the church through the Spirit, without Whom it could not be.

Very important too are vers. 27, 28. The first proves that the local assembly (here primarily at Corinth) is Christ’s body, and severally members. It represents in the locality that body, assuredly not as independent of, but as one with, all on earth. Compare 1 Cor. 1:2. All the saints here below were God’s assembly, and each a member not of an but of the assembly, Christ’s body. So the second demonstrates that if God set some in the assembly, it means not of course locally, but in it as a whole on earth. Certainly the apostles, etc., were not set in the Corinthian church or any other locality in particular. God sets the gifts in the assembly as a whole. They are, like the humblest Christians, members of the body; and the Holy Spirit acts therein by each as He pleases here below, for obviously it is no question of

heaven. Thus, as the given Spirit abides with us for ever (John 14), it is unbelief to doubt that Christ's body exists here still, or that He can fail on His part. Let the members of Christ see that they be subject to the written word which alone secures the truth.

1 Cor. 14 furnishes, what was so necessary, the Lord's regulation of the assembly. For the exercise of gift therein (whatever the liberty where is the Spirit of the Lord) is not left to the licence, any more than the authority, of man. It is for His glory Who is the Second Man. The apostle therefore explains not only the relative value of the gifts, which men were apt to mistake, but the order that befits God's presence and promotes the edification of saints. What he wrote they were to recognise as the Lord's commandment. Now is all this, so due to His name, so full of enjoyment and growth and communion, is it obsolete? Is it not only lost for our joint walk, edification, and worship (15-17), but so fatally that we are not to seek thus to assemble, or to count on God's blessing in the only order He prescribes for the proper assembly of His own here below? Of course evangelising, or trading with individual gift, is not here in question.

In Eph. 2 the truth appears no less clearly, though viewed, on the side, not of the Spirit's presence and action to glorify the Lord, but of Christ's love to the church. Hence are omitted all references to such sign gifts as tongues, interpretations, miracles, healings. But nowhere is the unity of the church revealed more plainly, nowhere with greater elevation, or out of love so deep. Yet here as ever (and it is due to Christ and to God, to say nothing of the soul), the individual blessedness of saints is carefully treated before the

church is so much as named, in the strongest contrast with the catholic system which makes all blessing hinge on the church to its own glory but really its shame. Now in Christ Jesus believing Gentiles, once far off, are become nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace who made both (i.e. Jews and Gentiles) one, and broke down the middle wall of partition... that He might create the two in Himself into one new man, making peace, and might reconcile both in one body to God by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby. So at the close of chapter 2 we are said to be built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, as the Ephesian saints also were being builded together for God's habitation in the Spirit. Thus God's house, like Christ's body, is shown to be the church, founded on redemption, and made good by the Spirit sent from heaven to that end.

Eph. 4 presents the Spirit's unity with great fulness before treating of the gifts: "one body and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, Who is over all, and through all, and in you [or, us] all" (4-6). Diversity follows in the gifts, which are not simply powers here as in 1 Cor. 12, but persons endowed for special ends in Christ's love to His own. His ascension is the declared starting-point after His wondrous humiliation and its fruit. "But to each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.... And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, unto ministerial work, unto edifying of the body of Christ, until we all attain," etc.

This is unmistakeable if we are simple, deriving both the one body and the several gifts from Christ on high after His victory over Satan to our deliverance, and that work of redemption which has perfectly glorified God even as to sin and our sins, so that His love can flow to the uttermost. Thus and therefore is Christ set as Head over all things to the church His body. What a glorious place this gives to not only the church but those gifts, the exercise of which constitutes ministry of the word!

Beyond controversy the foundation gifts are the apostles and prophets. The basis of N.T. truth they so well laid that there was no room for their continuance, still less for the delusion of their revival. The others, evangelists as well as pastors and teachers, are given “till we all attain,” etc. Do we wish better security than the written word? Does unbelief tempt us to think that the one body admits of change without sin, or that the gifts of Christ fail, so that we need human imitations to supply their place? Do we believe that Christ’s body abides on earth from the first, as that only to which we belong wherever we dwell, according to which we are called to walk and in nothing else? Do we believe that He has given evangelists to win the unconverted, or pastors and teachers to tend and feed His sheep as truly now as on the day of Pentecost?

The Epistle to the Colossians teaches no other doctrine, though its design is to assert the glory of Christ the Head rather than to develop the nature and privileges of the body. Indeed the special aspect of the mystery made known to the Gentile saints is Christ in them the hope of glory i.e. on high; the converse of what the O.T. prophets teach, Christ the glory of His people Israel with all the nations blessed but subordinate. A marked warning is

against not holding the Head from Whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God (Col. 2:19). Heathen philosophy and judaising ordinances were the dangers; and so they are to this day. Christ, not merely as Lord, nor yet as Saviour of sinners, but as Head of the body, is the object of faith, Christ,ever working for the best good of all the body, not only through such a gift as Paul, but through the less considerable and marked, "the joints and bands" (cf. Eph. 4:16). Thus was "all the body" to increase with the increase of God.

What a contrast with the increase of man when the spread of profession became multitudinous! "In the distress of the battle of Tolbiac Clovis [still a Pagan] loudly invoked the God of Clotilda and the Christians; and victory disposed him to hear with respectful gratitude the eloquent Remigius, bishop of Rheims, who forcibly displayed the temporal and spiritual advantages of his conversion. The king declared himself satisfied of the truth of the catholic faith; and the political reasons which might have suspended his public profession were removed by the devout or loyal acclamations of the Franks, who showed themselves alike prepared to follow their heroic leader to the field of battle or to the baptismal font... The new Constantine was immediately baptised with three thousand of his warlike subjects; and their example was imitated by the remainder of the gentle barbarians, who in obedience to the victorious prelate adored the cross which they had burnt, and burnt the idols which they had formerly adored" (Gibbon's D.& F. chap. xxxviii. A. D. 496).

The departure of the ancient systems into sanctioned error and evil is no doubt true. The Reformed Protestant

systems began without any intelligence of the church of God; the Dissenters split off with less sense of it if possible. If we feel for the Lord's injured honour, and if we love the church, are we not bound to purge ourselves from the vessels to dishonour, as in a great house? What can we do but humble ourselves before God for that ruin in Christendom which we have all shared, and fall back on all that is open to us to obey in this evil day? We are sanctified by the Spirit to obedience: the divine word is the rule, and He is the yet abiding power. We are here and always to follow the Lord, not men. Are we to slight the organisation of Christ's body and His gifts for either the old devices or the new inventions around us? I trust not.

Unity Of The Church In The Inspired History

In full accord with what has been shown from the Gospel of John and from the Pauline epistles are the facts presented in the Acts of the Apostles. The disciples were born of God and had genuine faith. From deep anguish they had joy in their risen Lord. But as yet they were awaiting "the promise of the Father, which [said he] ye have heard of me. For John baptised with water; but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit not many days hence" (Acts 1:4, 5). They had not yet His personal presence so as to make them one. They were living units, but did and could not yet possess the promised unity. Saints of God individually, they were soon in virtue of one Spirit to be baptised into one body, Christ's body (1 Cor. 12:13). Meanwhile they all gave themselves, Mary etc. with them, to persevering prayer.

When the day of Pentecost was a-fulfilling (Acts 2), the wondrous answer came. The Holy Spirit, attended by

significant tokens, filled them all; and they began to speak with other tongues. Devout Jews from every nation were then dwelling at Jerusalem, who could recognise their own languages in Galilean lips telling out the mighty things of God, not in creation now, but in redemption. Nor was there only the church of God but the gospel of grace. For to those pricked in heart by the truth preached and saying, “What shall we do?” the word was, “Repent ye, and be baptised each of you in (or on) the name of Jesus Christ for remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (ver. 38). Thus was the blessing to go on, as it began; the saintly status precedes the grace which established unity and gifts. Repentance unto life, and washing away of sins in baptism, were followed by not gifts merely but the Holy Spirit given.

Thus were added about 3,000 souls that day; and they persevered in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and the prayers. It was not a human or voluntary association, but a divine institution of unequalled character, the one body of Christ.1 “And the Lord was adding together [the true text] daily those that should be saved” (cf. ver. 47 with 44). Baptism was the mark or sacramental badge for the individual; the Lord’s Supper, for the communion of saints as one body (1 Cor. 10:16, 17).

But beyond controversy the article of the church stood, not on the truth of justification by faith, but on the presence and action of the Holy Spirit. When this was a new thing, grace gave plain, characteristic, and irrefragable proofs. These do not seem continued beyond the apostolic era and the close of the N.T. canon, which supplied henceforward the weightier attestation

of permanent authority in God's word. At first, as Christ, so also His own, had favour with all the people; for unselfish love, happiness, and holiness, all hanging on the name of the crucified but exalted Jesus, told on conscience and heart, to say nothing of wonders and signs.

But as the work grew, the Jewish rulers became exasperated and threatened in vain; for with great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. Lying was sternly judged "within" as lying to the Holy Spirit, for God was there as never before (Acts 5:4). Signs were yet more abundant subsequently, as before the place wherein they were assembled shook in answer to their praying. Yea, their baffled religious adversaries might imprison or beat the apostles, but what could be done with men rejoicing to be counted worthy of dishonour for the Name? And every day in the temple and at home they ceased not preaching and teaching Jesus the Christ. The overwhelming appeal of Stephen to the Jews, always resisting the Holy Spirit as their fathers did, drew out their hatred unto blood; and all the saints were scattered save the apostles. But thereon the free action of the Spirit in the work of the gospel went forward outside the Jews. Even Saul, who had consented in his blind fury to Stephen's murder, was called as apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9), and pre-eminently became also minister of the church, whose union with Christ was conveyed in our Lord's words at his conversion, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest."

Now no one disputes that the saints assembled at first in private houses to remember the Lord in His supper, the centre of their worship. It was expressly κατ᾽ οἶκον "at

home," in contrast with the temple (Acts 2:46); and there would they teach the disciples, if not preach more openly (ver. 42). Ere long, even in Jerusalem, they might need a hundred upper chambers instead of that one which sufficed before Pentecost. Unity does not at all depend on all assembling within a single apartment. This would make it material. It is really in the power of the Holy Spirit. Hence coming together ἐπὶ τὸ αὐὸτ (1 Cor. 11:20) admits of as many localities as suited the convenience of saints dwelling sometimes in all the quarters of an extensive city. No matter how numerous the assemblages might be, scripture (i.e. God's mind) regards the saints as the church met together for the same purpose. One Spirit, not theirs but God's, created and maintained the unity for the manifestation of God's glory in Christ. Hence we never hear of "churches" but solely of "the church" in a city as in Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, etc.; though we read of "the churches" of Judea, Galatia, Macedonia, Asia, etc.

The notion however of "churches" only on earth, contrasted with "the church" in heaven, is not only unfounded but opposed to the word of God. For this reveals, not alone the fact of local assemblies up and down the earth, but that the saints there are members of one body, in which they are set by God according to His will for His glory. That some are no longer alive but gone to be with Christ in no way clashes with the living fact; for the Spirit came down here to establish the unity. Even among men the regiment abides the same, though individual soldiers are there no more. Independency is therefore the direct negation of that unity of the saints in one body here below, throughout manifested once, which each and all are responsible to manifest, though it

be now manifested only by few. There was but one communion on earth according to the Lord's will and the apostles' teaching. A Christian (when godly discipline forbade not) was member of the church everywhere; a pastor and teacher was Christ's gift wherever he might be. "God set" gifts in the church. Scripture recognises no such thought as membership or gift in a church. Barnabas and Simeon, Niger and Lucius, Manaen and Saul, laboured together in Antioch; but so did such as visited Jerusalem or any other place. Intercommunion was the invariable rule, and liberty, not to say responsibility, of ministry in love. It was the right of Christ, not man's.

Undoubtedly there were also local charges, elders and deacons, in due time and place. In Jerusalem the "seven" were looked out by the multitude of the disciples, and appointed by apostolic laying on of hands, Scripture is silent how the elders there (Acts 11:30, Acts 15:2-29) entered on their duties; but we know from Acts 14:23 that apostles chose them for the disciples, or an apostolic delegate like Titus (Titus 1:5) established them where the apostle could not act. In no case was there popular election of elders. It was a task too delicate and difficult for the saints as a company; and it demanded apostolic authority direct or indirect. As the disciples contributed their money, it was fitting that they should look out dispensers in whom they confided; it was for apostles or their delegates to choose overseers or presbyters, to whom the rest could give no authority.

The apostles derived authority as well as gift from Christ, the source of both. As Christ conferred the highest and widest authority on the apostles, so did they appoint presbyters or elders and deacons in their local

places respectively; the one as a spiritual charge, the other in temporal things, as is fully explained by the apostle, not to the assembly, but to Timothy in the third chapter of his first Epistle. One sees in the quotation which Eusebius draws (H. E. iii. 23) from Clem. Alex. how far the truth was lost thus early; for how absurd to imagine the apostle John recurring to lots! a mode adopted before the Holy Spirit was given (Acts 1), as Chrysostom rightly acknowledges.

But local charge is in principle distinct from the gifts which the ascended [lead of the body gave for the perfecting of the saints. Never do elders or deacons appear on any such ground. For the gifts flow direct from Christ, and are for His body wherever it may be. Nor does 1 Cor. 12 differ in this from Eph. 4, or Rom. 12 from Col. 2. And for this reason what unspeakable mercy to the saints! For the supply of those gifts which are of all moment depends on His grace and faithful care Who can no more fail now that He is on high, than when He came down to accomplish redemption for God’s glory. In none of these, scriptures can we restrain the church or the body to a local assembly, though a local assembly was wholly wrong if it did not represent it. The assembly on earth as a whole is contemplated; and in it, manifestly one body, the gifts were set. Hence the apostle treats it as no less visible than Jews or Greeks (1 Cor. 10:32).

This is the unity which is supposed in the very weighty scripture of 1 Tim. 3:15. “But if I delay, that thou mayest know how to conduct oneself in God’s house, which is a living God’s assembly, pillar and support of the truth.” Invisibility is out of the question. Responsible manifestation is the essence of what the apostle has

before him and urgently presses. Nor would any other thought have been entertained, but for the practical ruin which so soon ensued, and the subsequent and deeper failure when the truth got swamped under tradition which was but precepts of men. Then began the desire to plead an invisible aggregate of saints within a visible mixed multitude, as if the church were only another Israel. The truth rather is that the church has departed from manifesting its original unity, according to the sad history of all the varied trials of man under responsibility here below. Who can see independent churches in the decree of Acts 15? Who can limit “all the flock,” or “the church of God” in Acts 20:28, to the city of Ephesus? The R. Catholics have abused the fact of the church as a visible unity everywhere to their own mere majority and the grossest sectarianism, heterodoxy, and idolatry. This does not justify Protestants in denying responsible and holy unity according to God’s institution, or claiming license to set up churches independent one of another.

Are we then helplessly, hopelessly, bound by a chain of sin, either individually, or in our corporate place? If we turn away, as we are commanded, from those that create divisions and occasions of falling (Rom. 16:17), is there no way by grace to stand approved when not merely schisms but sects appear (1 Cor. 11:18, 19)? God has answered this very difficulty in 2 Tim. 2:19-21, which contemplates a state of disorder beyond rectifying. “Howbeit the firm foundation of God standeth, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his, and, Let everyone that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness. Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of

earth; and some unto honour and some unto dishonour. If one therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, meet for the master's use, prepared to every good work."

Before the church began, the Lord had given the great assuring resource for the darkest day: "where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). In the brightest day no privilege more pregnant of blessing. We cannot expect all saints to recognise their relationship as members, and to refuse every body save the one body of Christ; but we can believe and act in faith ourselves. This is not a sect, but the way to be kept from it, while we look to the Lord, and own the ruin in loving sorrow. For without a real share in Christ's sense of the dishonour done thus to His name, knowing the church's privilege, and seeking to realise it, only ends in pride, evil, and worse confusion.

We are free, not to say bound, to remember Him in the breaking of the bread, but only in the unity of His body, and therefore receiving all that are His, save where His discipline intercepts. "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matt. 12:30). Undoubtedly we need the Spirit of God to guide us aright in the midst of the scatterings and perplexities of Christendom; but we have Him dwelling in us, that living in the Spirit we may walk in the Spirit, not only as individuals but keeping His unity in the bond of peace. Obedience, according to the word of God, is the safe-guard of holiness in every way: to this we are sanctified by the Spirit.

W. K.

1 “Divisions among Christians” (Ward & Co.) is a work apparently by a theorist and representing only the anonymous writer’s ideas, though it may contain a measure of truth. chiefly applied negatively if one may judge by extracts; for I know no friend that has even seen it.

The Body, the Church

Jesus had shed His blood, was risen, and by the right hand of God exalted. If God had been glorified in Him, He also glorified Him in Himself, and this straightway. The Son of Man ascended up where He was before. He was glorified with the Father's own self, with the glory which He had with the Father before the world was.

Nor was His glorification without result to others. If on earth the Son of David could not disown the higher glories of His person, but rather led on the faith of a poor woman of Canaan to that infinite source of grace beyond, which, while it brought down to a real sense of the depth of degradation and woe, abounded but the more in streams of healing mercy; if on earth, "He could not be hid," what was the suited blessing that flowed down from the God-exalted Man, crowned with glory and honour in heaven? Were those He loved to taste no savour of His joy above? Was there to be no peculiar, no present, power of fellowship with Him, and worthy of Him Who was set at God's right hand "in the heavenly places far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come?"

On the contrary, it is precisely in this interval between His session on His Father's throne, and His coming to take His seat on His own throne, that the great mystery of Christ and of the church finds its place, development, and revelation. God, whose earthly purposes had been seemingly frustrated but really secured, though for a time in abeyance, uses the cross meanwhile as the basis of other and higher counsels (settled in His mind before

the world was, but until now hidden in Himself), and thereupon exalts the crucified Lord of glory, and sends down the Holy Ghost, not only as the one and divine witness of what and where Christ was, but as the gatherer, by His own presence here below, of an assembly from among Jews and Gentiles, brought into the participation of the heavenly glory of Christ — in a word, as the formative agent of the church, which is Christ's body, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

Beyond just question, it is in reference to this new and heavenly assembly that scripture speaks of the closest identification with Christ, of oneness with Him as His body. By such a oneness, it is not merely meant that persons here and there, few or many, had been and are objects of love and quickening power of the Son of God. Life is not, nor does it produce, this oneness; abstractedly, it finds and leaves the recipients of it individuals still. Life did not set aside for this world, for those who possessed it, the remarkable characteristic and divinely sanctioned separation of Jews from Gentiles; much less did it sever externally believing Jews from their unbelieving kinsmen according to the flesh, whatever the mutual sympathies, hopes, and conferences one with another, of them that feared Jehovah. If there were devout Gentiles, (and there is little reason to doubt that God in His mercy raised up such, witness Cornelius, before the gospel of His grace could righteously be preached), they served Him and worshipped Him, but as Gentiles nevertheless. There was no fusion of these with the godly Jews. The faith of one might be admirable in the eyes of the Lord Himself-"so great faith He had not found, no, not in Israel:" still it did not hinder his remaining a Gentile.

Faith therefore in itself did not, and could not, alter that, as regards this life. It was reserved not for the gift but for the Giver of faith to work a wondrous, unlooked-for, and total reversal of the ancient order. So as to the Jews, though they had the gifts and calling of God, if any believed, the faith of individuals wrought without a doubt a moral separation, and sufferings were the consequence; and the new life has affections as proper to it as are depraved lusts to the old life; yet were not the faithful Jews formed into a manifested holy company here below: they lived as Jews, they died as Jews. It would have been sin in them to have relinquished their prerogative and standing as Jews. Even in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus, the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, was not abolished. It existed still — nay, had His sanction, when He forbade those commissioned in the days of His flesh to go into the way of the Gentiles, or to enter into a city of the Samaritans.

Now the doctrine of the Epistle to the Ephesians (Eph. 2, 3) is that, consequent upon the cross, an entirely novel and different work of God commenced: a work which, belonging to and awaiting its perfect display in the heavenly places, has an actual existence on earth, and most momentous effects in this present time. The point is not Christ dying for the Jewish nation, nor God thereby reconciling all things to Himself. It is not Christ's death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, nor for the blessing of any Gentiles who may be saved during His future reign; none of which things perhaps would be questioned by a scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven. But the doctrine there enforced is that God

founded upon the cross, and accomplished by the Holy Ghost thereon given, a platform and structure wholly without parallel in the millennial age, when the old outstanding differences will be resumed, as abundantly appears from the Psalms and Prophets.

The apostle in Eph. 2:11-18 thus contrasts the new thing with their previously existing relations, the one dispensationally nigh, and the other afar off:-

“Wherefore remember, that ye being at one time Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands — that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye who at one time were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who made both one, and broke down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, the law of commandments [contained] in ordinances; that He might make in Himself of the two one new man, making peace; and He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby. And He came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and peace to them that were nigh. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”

That is, in and for the church, such fleshly distinctions are done away. Beyond a doubt, in the church’s glory accomplished on high, they will be unknown. But the apostle goes farther, and particularly insists that they are, and ought to be, unknown now. No man, not even Christ, known after the flesh, is the key-note of the

church: “yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more.” The church can rest on nothing short of death and resurrection. She rejoices in her Head glorified in heaven, and knows herself even now one with Him there. Consequently she is raised alike above the high estate of the Jew, and above the low estate of the Gentile. “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour” (Phil. 3:20).

But again, if the mass of those gathered into the church were dark, outcast Gentiles; if they could not say, we are “Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises, whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever,” they received a better adoption and a more surpassing glory: not merely covenants connected with earthly things and presented by a Messiah (whatever His own personal dignity), as minister of the circumcision, for the truth of God to confirm the promises made unto the fathers; but the unsearchable riches of Christ freely given, which it was meet for the God of grace and glory to bestow upon the far-off penury and wretchedness of those who possessed nothing!

This was “the mystery” which was specially entrusted to the apostle Paul, made known unto him by revelation, “as I wrote before in a few words, whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ; which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it was now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles

should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel." It consists of Christ as well as of the church, she only by grace having oneness with Him Who is Head over all things.

In previous ages the Spirit had quickened souls: there was nothing strange in that. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," said the Son of God, not yet lifted up. The extraordinary thing was, that, when the Jews perverted their singular endowments to sin and insult the most aggravated against God, not aiding only but provoking and inciting the Gentiles to the crucifixion of their own Messiah, occasion was taken of the breach thus of necessity made between God and a guilty world, to introduce a secret hitherto undisclosed but now unveiled. The elect nation had consummated their corruption and violence. God's name was blasphemed among the heathen through those who were separated to be the grand depository of His oracles and the witness of His character on earth. What remained, if thus the earth and its choicest people were in rebellion ? Heaven; and so, in the depths of divine compassion and wisdom and love, God began to create a new body neither Jewish nor Gentile properly, though chosen out of either, both made one, both reconciled in one body, destined for a sphere as alien from the most exalted as from the most debased of earth.

"God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause His face to shine upon us," say the Jewish saints in Ps. 67, "that thy way may be made known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations..... God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him." Such is the order of blessing in the world to come: the Jews in the

inner circle, and in the outer the Gentiles through them glad and singing for joy, for God will govern in righteousness. The blessing of the nations was an ancient and reiterated truth; proclaimed to Abraham (Gen. 12:3), renewed in the Seed (Gen. 22:18), repeated to Isaac (Gen. 26:4), and to Jacob (Gen. 28:14). It was bound up in terms with the promises so well known and cherished, which guaranteed the highest seat on earth to the seed of Abraham.

Is, then, a most certain and familiar pledge of Gentile blessing in the promised Seed, so often and not obscurely referred to in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, — is this the mystery which has been “hid from ages and from generations, but is now made manifest to the saints”? Can that with propriety be said specially and absolutely to be hid, which was among the simplest and most frequently recurring household words of the people of God, from the time of the first promise to the patriarchs? There is no secret nor silence about that which was published from age to age, and declared from generation to generation. What was made known to the fathers, and indeed to all Israel, cannot be, for this very reason, the mystery of Christ — that peculiar mystery, “which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it was now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.”

Some, I am aware, through unbelief and a consequent lack of spiritual intelligence and heed to human tradition, have unwittingly sought to neutralise the speciality, and thereby the nature and being, of “the mystery,” by the assumption that it had been revealed from the beginning, and that it was always, though

dimly, understood by the Old Testament saints. The answer is plain and direct: the apostle Paul says positively that “it was now revealed.” From the beginning of the world it was hid in God (Eph. 3:9). To the apostles and prophets it was now revealed, and to none previously — ὡς νῦν ἀπεκαλύφθη τοῖς ἁγίοις ἀποστόλοις αὐτοῦ καὶ προφήταις ἐν πνεύματι. Certainly it is not to the apostles at the present and to the prophets at a former time. It was “now” revealed, and that to persons joined together as a common class to which the revelation was then made; as the structure of the words necessarily implies to any competent to judge of such a question, shutting out therefore the idea of any prophets being referred to before the Pentecostal mission of the Spirit. The prophets, alluded to in the text, were of the present economy as much as the apostles were; and therefore the words, far from weakening, tend directly to strengthen the distinctive character of “the mystery,” as a thing wholly unrevealed in former times. It was a new revelation.

The character, also, of the Abrahamic blessing of the Gentiles is totally different from that of “the mystery.” “In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed,” etc. (Gen. 22). All the nations are to be blessed in the Seed; but they are, and are here regarded as being, distinct from it. They are no more to be confounded with Israel, so as to form one common body, than are the enemies whose gate is to be the possession of Israel. It and the nations are assuredly to inherit a blessing. But if it be the same blessing, will

any one maintain that it is after the same mode or in the same measure? If it be so-if the seed and all the nations of the earth are blessed indiscriminately and alike, where is the marked and characteristic prerogative of the seed of Abraham? Or is there, in truth, no peculiar privilege for his seed after all? If, on the other hand, it be not so, and the seed is to have its own proper promised place by divine favour, higher than all the nations who are blessed in Christ, then is the oath to Abraham most clearly distinguished from “the mystery” wherein no such differences exist, but the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and joint-partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel.

Let it be repeated, that Ephesians 2 and 3 do not teach the permanent and unlimited setting aside of Jewish exaltation above the Gentile. To such a superiority in this world the Jews had a lawful title, until Christ, in rejection, ascended into heaven; and such a superiority will be theirs when He returns again. But there is the abolition of everything of the sort for that which spans the interim, in other words, for the intermediate calling of the church. Because the church is not a mere aggregate of units or of believing persons throughout all ages, but a special body gathered by virtue of the Holy Ghost, now present and dwelling in them as a temple too, for association with the heavenly glory of Christ; as the redeemed Jews in the millennium will be the nearest and most favoured objects of His earthly rule, when He appears in glory.

It is, then, the personal presence of the Holy Ghost, descended from heaven, which acts as the power of the unity established here below in the church: a unity not merely of life — of doctrine — of service, but of the

Spirit; the unity formed and perpetuated by the Holy Ghost Himself (Eph. 4:3). The disciples, like saints before them, were believers before Pentecost; but they were then, and not before, united to Christ in heavenly places as His body. That which unites to Christ, constituting us members of His body, as scripture so often declares, is not the faith which the Spirit communicates as He has ever done, but the Spirit Himself subsequently and personally given, as was the case at Pentecost.

Observe, it is not “unity of spirit.” This is the theme pressed upon the Philippians (Phil. 1:27): “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ; that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel;” and compare Phil. 3:16. Nor has the apostle forgotten elsewhere to pray for the saints at Rome, that the God of patience and consolation would grant them to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus, that they might with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace as this surely is, the exhortation in Ephesians 4 is of a higher order. It is not so much the spirit of themselves, or of one another that they were to think of; it is the Spirit given, the unity of the Spirit. Moreover, the apostle does not tell them to form a society by community of object, agreement of opinion, or likeness of manners. Certainly it was not an optional alliance which they were called upon to frame. The Spirit present makes the unity. Their business is, “using diligence to keep (or, observe, τηρεῖν) it in the bond of peace.” How humbling to man and exalting to God: how

encouraging, wholesome, and strengthening for His saints!

To one who has entered, howsoever little, into the divine estimate of what the church is and will be in the counsels of God, or even of what the church originally was when, gazing into the heavenly face of Him Who loved her, she reflected by the Spirit somewhat of the light of God's glory which she had seen there — to the heart of such a one, grieving over the wreck of the deposit that was committed to the frail and treacherous hands of man, and humbled at his puny and ineffectual and proud efforts to repair the ruin which he can no longer disguise — to such, I say, oh! what a relief to know and feel that even here in the desert it is not "my flock," nor "our church," but the church of God, the body of Christ, the unity of the Spirit!

These are the living realities with which we have to do; and at all cost to repudiate in ourselves, or in others, corporately and individually, all that denies them. That single-eyed unflinching allegiance to the wideness of God's heart about His people must, in a time of general departure from Him, lead into an isolated path, I do not doubt, however paradoxical it may seem. That it may appear to be a severe exclusive narrowness, to those who are not weaned from the worldliness and unbelief of essays on a grand scale, is possible; but for the faithful there is no choice. "Let us go forth, therefore, unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach."

None of course would deny that, as men, as sinners, as Jews or Gentiles, there are certain things possessed in common with others. There is a unity of mankind, as such or fallen, as under law and without law. There is a

continuity in the administration of the promises dispensationally on earth, according to which Rom. 11 views, first, the Jews as the natural branches of the olive-tree; then, some of them broken off because of unbelief, and the Gentiles, or wild olive-tree, grafted among them; and afterwards, upon the Gentiles not continuing in the goodness of God, the Jews grafted again into their own olive-tree.1 Again, there is a unity which dates higher up than the olive-tree of earthly witness-that of all the faithful, who, in the acknowledgement of common sin, look to a common Saviour, as there will be a blessed and holy communion of such as have part in the first resurrection.

But all these varied groups are demonstrably distinct from “the unity of the Spirit.” With the redeemed, it is true, the Spirit had to do, inasmuch as He it is Who had given souls to believe God’s salvation in Christ. This therefore was not, whereas the unity of the Spirit is, a new thing; for never before had He come to abide in sinners redeemed, and thus to make them one with Christ glorified on high and one with each other here below. Satan had his union of Jews and Gentiles in the cross of the Son of God; and in that cross the foundation was laid for God’s union, effected by the presence and indwelling of the Spirit in those who enjoy the exceeding riches of the grace of God in His kindness toward them through Christ Jesus. “There is one body and one Spirit.”

Another remark, connecting itself with the foregoing, needs to be made. Those who form the church, whatever may be their distinctive endowments, share many blessings with all saints who ever have been and ever may be. Election, redemption, faith, saintship, and heirship in the kingdom are doubtless our privileges; but

they are not the exclusive property of the church. They are common to all believers. So true is this, that they may be traced in the spared and blessed Gentiles of the striking scene described in Matt. 25:31-46.

Thus the Son of man is supposed to be already come and seated upon the throne of His glory, and He separates, among all the Gentiles (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη) gathered before Him, the sheep from the goats. The gospel of the kingdom had been preached, it may be observed, for a witness to all those Gentiles (πᾶσι τοῖς ἔθνεσι) before the end came; and the ground of the sentence is laid in the reception or rejection of those whom Jesus, as the King (for His royal rights are now enforced, displayed, and acknowledged), designates as His brethren, a class evidently distinct from, though coming in contact with, the sheep and the goats. To the sheep, set at His right hand, the King says “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” That these are believing souls, redeemed by the blood of Christ, none perhaps would dispute; and the passage affirms that the kingdom which they inherit was prepared for them from the foundation of the world: terms which differ indeed from those in Eph. 1 (which show how the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ chose us in Him before the foundation of the world), but sufficiently decisive of the fact that God prepared a special inheritance for these living Gentiles, whatever might be the small amount of their spiritual intelligence.

But if there are blessings common to all believers of every age, the Holy Ghost, on the other hand, could not personally come down, and abide in men on earth, according to the scriptural figure springing up in them

as well as flowing out, until Jesus was glorified in heaven. But when He took His seat there as the exalted head, the Holy Ghost was sent down for the purpose of gathering a body for Christ. This and this only is called in the scriptures “the church of God;” and its unity, hinging upon the baptism of the Holy Ghost, is, as we have seen, “the unity of the Spirit.” Matt. 16:18 is the first occurrence of the word “church,” i.e. assembly, in the New Testament. It is important to observe that there it is spoken of as a thing not merely unmanifested, and unordered, but not yet existing. It was not built, nor building yet: “upon this rock I will build my church.” Secondly, the promise that the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it hardly alludes to the indefectibility, much less to the infallibility, of the church on earth. Thirdly, Christ’s church is mentioned as altogether distinct from the kingdom of heaven, the keys of which (not of His church) the Lord promises to give to Peter.

The unity of the church as Christ’s body will surely be displayed perfectly for the administration of the fulness of seasons, when God will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. But does not this scripture teach, that the church, if for the time on earth to itself as the heavenly witness of the grace of God, will then form part of a common system? I answer, that the passage seems, on the contrary, to keep distinct the church in her own peculiar and pre-eminent seat of the affection and glory of Christ. For, first, the apostle speaks of the heavenly things and the earthly things being headed up in Christ, which is deduced (in Colossians 1:15, 16) from His claims as Creator, though asserted by Him as the Firstborn of every creature; in which latter text we have

His supremacy affirmed by right of creation over all things that are in heaven and that are on earth. Next, it is added, “In whom [Christ] also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will; that we should be to the praise of His glory who have pre-trusted in Christ: in whom ye also,” etc. (Eph. 1:11-13).

Just so we may observe, after the statement of His headship over all things, the Epistle to the Colossians turns to another headship. “And He is the head of the body, the church: the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.” Neither heavenly things nor earthly things are the church, though they are to be the inheritance she shares who is co-heir with Christ. God “hath put all things under His feet, and given Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body.” Instead of being included in “all things under His feet,” she enjoys and participates in His supremacy over all by virtue of being one with Him. Sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, she looks for an inheritance such as becomes Him Who purchased it, and Him also Who is its earnest; such as becomes (may we not add?) the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, “to whom be glory in the church throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” See also Rev. 21:2, 3.

But although it is for “the administration of the fulness of seasons” that the glory of Christ, shared by the church as His bride, will be revealed, so that the world itself shall know it, yet was there a testimony to it, produced and manifested by the power of the Holy Ghost in the one body on earth. When the apostle spoke

of the saints being “builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit,” was this unity a thing ideal, future, and only to be achieved in heaven? Or was it not an actual present fact made good here below by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven? Is it not true that “now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places is made known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God?” And the unity of the Spirit, which the saints should be diligent to keep, where was it if not on earth? Will the saints in heaven use their diligence to keep it there? Again, the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers given of Christ (Himself ascended up far above all heavens), where were they, and where still are the gifts of Christ? Where and to what end is exercised the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ? Does the perfecting (καταρτισμὸς) of the saints, does the work of the ministry, does the edifying of the body of Christ, find their sphere in heaven? Is it there that we are in danger of being tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of men’s doctrine? Is it not on earth that we meet with “sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive?” Is it not here that we “grow up unto him in all things, who is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:15, 16)? It was here, in the church, that each joint of supply wrought, contributing nourishment to the whole: it was here, according to the effectual working in the measure of each one part, that the body made increase. It is in this world, and in this world only, that “all the body, by joints and bands having nourishment ministered and

knit together, increaseth with the increase of God;" as it is assuredly here that the Spirit would have the peace of Christ to rule in our hearts, to the which also we were called in one body (Col. 2, 3).

In writing to the saints at Rome (Rom. 12), hitherto never seen by the apostle, and therefore in man's judgment at least connected in no peculiar way with him, as was the case too with regard to the Colossians, it is just the same: "As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same function; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." Evidently it is not a tie which was going to be established, but a relationship then and really existent. Membership is not with a local church but with the body of Christ; though, on the other hand, if one be not in fellowship with the assembly of Christ's members where one resides, there can be for such no fellowship with them anywhere else at the same time.

Nor can language be more explicit than that of 1 Cor. 12. "But all these worketh the one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of the body being many are one body; so also is the Christ. For by one Spirit were we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free; and were all given to drink of one Spirit" (ver. 13). The composition of that one body depends upon the baptism of the Holy Ghost. By Him are we baptised into the body of Christ, Jews, Gentiles, bond or free; it matters not. The great fact is, that Jesus exercised His heavenly rights. He baptised with the Holy Ghost; and they who were thus baptised became the immediate and the especial field of His presence and operations, the

body of Christ, the body subsisting on earth, and acted on by the Spirit when the apostle wrote.

The diversities of gifts, of administrations, and of operations, will not be in heaven. Their province is the church on earth. It is here that the manifestation is given to every man (i.e., in the church) to profit withal. If any reasonable doubt could be harboured about the word of wisdom to one, the word of knowledge to another, and faith to a third, there can be no question in the believer's mind, that the gifts of healing, the working of miracles, divers kinds of tongues, and their interpretation, are not prospectively for heaven but for earth now. It is the one and selfsame Spirit Who energised all these, distributing to each. For the many members constitute but one body; "by one Spirit were we all baptised into one body."

The importance of these last words will be better estimated on comparing with them Acts 1:4, 5; and particularly the clause, "Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." At the time the disciples were believers. They had life, and life more abundantly, we may say Jesus, the quickening Spirit, had breathed upon them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," etc. He had also opened their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures. But none of these things is the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Pentecost first beheld the accomplishment of the promise of the Father. Then, and not before, were believers baptised with the Spirit. But it is this baptism which introduces into, and forms, the one body; it is the Spirit, thus present and baptising, Who began and organises, as He recruits the body of Christ. Hence is it, that coincident with the baptism of the Holy Ghost, we first hear in the

word of God of this new body, and of membership therein. Whatever the privileges (and there were many) which existed before, that which is distinctively called in the Bible the church of God appeared here below, as the consequence of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, dwelling in the disciples, and baptising them, Jews or Gentiles, into one body, of which the ascended Christ is the Head. The church, His body, derived its being from His presence in heaven as the glorified Man, and from the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit on earth.

‘‘But, as it is, God set the members every one of them in the body, even as it pleased him. And if they all were one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. [And] the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary; and those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness while our comely parts have no need. But God tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to the [part] which lacked, that there might be no schism in the body; but that the members might have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with [it]; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with [it]. Now ye are Christ’s body and members in particular.” 1 Cor. 12:18- 27.

When Christ’s members are together in heaven, our mortal body changed, fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself, will any “seem to be

more feeble?" Shall we think any to be "less honourable" there, and, "upon these bestow more abundant honour?" That this is a present care, flowing out of the sense God gives us of the exigencies and of the preciousness of Christ's body here below, is exactly what I am contending for. Does any one believe that such will be our employment when Christ presents the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing? But if not, these members were members of the body then on earth, for God had tempered the body together, "having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked, that there might be no schism in the body (in heaven there is no danger of schism); but that the members might have the same care one for another." "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it: or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it," this is clearly not in heaven, but on earth. "Now ye are Christ's body and members in particular:" where and when is this? Surely then on earth. Heaven is not in question. It was a subsisting fact here, though in the spiritual sphere, and fraught with blessing and responsibility of the utmost importance to Christ's glory for every one of His members.

"And God did set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." Manifestly, these are gifts in the church-the whole church on earth. The apostle addresses, no doubt, the church of God that was at Corinth; while it is very clear that the New Testament frequently speaks of assemblies in this or that locality, that is, churches (compare Rom. 15:1, 5; Gal. 1:2, 22;

Col. 4:15, 16; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2:14, etc). But, besides this which is not disputed, as well as the application of the term in Heb. 12:23 to the congregation of the firstborn which are written in heaven viewed as a completed thing, however anticipative faith might say, “Ye have come” to it, even as to the other components of the glory — besides in short the local and the future senses, 1 Cor. 12:28 is clearly another sense of the most important bearing, as seen elsewhere in the Epistles of Paul: the church, as a body here below, in a breadth as extensive as the baptism of the Spirit. That entire society or corporation, wherein He dwelt and wrought, was the church in which God set apostles, prophets, teachers, etc. Certainly it is impossible to say that He had set all these in the Corinthian assembly; nor will it be maintained that He is to set them in the church universal gathered on high.

There is, then, another and large sense of “the church,” in which unity is predicated of all the members of Christ existing at one time in the world, whatever might be the distance separating their bodies; and that in virtue of one Spirit baptising them into one body. The body of Christ, like the natural one, is susceptible of increase, as scripture plainly indicates. But as in the natural body the identity subsists when the old particles have given place to new, so the body of Christ is the body still, whatever the changes in the members particularly. He Who by His presence imparted unity at its beginning, conserves unity by His own faithful presence. He was given to abide with the disciples for ever.

In fine, by “the church” is meant not a junction of various co-ordinate (much less conflicting) societies but a body, the one body of Christ, possessing the same

privileges and call and responsibility on earth, and looking for the same glory in heaven as the Bride of Christ. If a man were baptised by the Spirit, he was thereby constituted a member of the church; if he had a gift, it was to be exercised according to the proportion of faith for the good of the whole: not ministry, not membership, pertaining to a church but to the church; each joint belonging to the entire body, and the entire body to each joint (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 3, 12, 14; Eph. 1, 4; Col. 2; 1 Tim. 3:15; Rev. 22:17). If it be God's truth, it is for the believer to act on, to walk, serve, and worship in. Divine truth without corresponding faithfulness is the shame and condemnation of him who merely owns it. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

W.K.

1 In Romans 11 there is a cutting off as to the branches: in Ephesians there is nothing of the sort; it would be a dismembering of Christ, which is impossible. In Romans 11 the Jews were the natural branches, and the blessings were the blessings of their own olive-tree, into which, contrary to nature, the Gentiles are temporarily grafted. But in Ephesians those who were near and those who were afar off in the world were alike treated as lost sinners. The only character which either possessed by nature is that of "children of wrath" (such the favoured Jews were), "even as others."

One Body and One Spirit

The will of God is that His church should be one, not in spirit merely, but also in an embodied form, so as to exhibit its unity in each place, and its unity throughout the world (John 11:52; 17:11, 21; Acts 2:11; Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 1; 10; 12; Eph. 2; 4; 1 Tim. 3:15). This He will accomplish in perfection at the coming of Christ (John 17:21, 23; Eph. 5:27; Heb. 12:23; Rev. 19:7; 21:9). Meantime it is incumbent on all believers to seek this holy and manifested union, and to put away everything that hinders it. We may be weak in meeting our corporate responsibility, as we are in answering our individual calling to holiness. Still in both respects, and in spite of all difficulties, our duty remains clear, paramount, and inevitable. But this is not by the mass of Christians maintained as a sacred, irreversible, point of doctrine and practice.

Popery owns it, but after a carnal manner.

All the Protestant national bodies have asserted, and acted on, the assumed title to accommodate their modes of government, rites, ceremonies, etc., according to the will of their rulers, whether they be within or without the so-called churches. These, consequently, vary in different ages and countries. The dissenting bodies, again, have been formed, generally speaking, either according to the self-devised plan of some individual mind, sometimes without even the idea of the church of God occurring to its founders; or according to partial views of scripture truth, which scatter the faithful instead of uniting them.

The chief error of nationalism, in this or in any other country, is the latitudinarian opening of the door to receive into the most solemn acts of worship and Christian fellowship the whole population, i.e., in principle, irrespective of looking for the gift of the Spirit. That of dissent, on the contrary, is the sectarian closing of the door on real Christians who cannot utter the Shibboleth of the party; and thus many brethren are excluded. In a word the characteristic evil of the latter is, that they do not treat as Christians many who are known to be such; whereas the equally characteristic evil of the former is, that they do treat as Christians many who are known not to be such at all. The one system makes the limits broader, the other narrower than God's limits. In either way the proper scriptural idea of the church is practically destroyed: dissent virtually affirming that it is not one body, but many; while nationalism virtually denies that it is the body of Christ. God would have His children not to be separate, but to gather together to the name of Jesus. Now this is evidently set aside when you separate any who ought to be united, (viz., all believed on proper grounds to be true Christians), or when you associate as brethren in Christ with any who ought to be separate (viz., those who are plainly of this world,1 or who, if they profess Christ, deny Him in evil doctrines or works).

It may be replied perhaps, that though this was, beyond all legitimate question, the order of the Holy Spirit in the early days of the church, times and circumstances are altered now. Gifts of healing, working of miracles, diversities of tongues, no longer exist as they once did. All this is freely admitted. But we ask, Is there such a body as the church2 any longer on the earth? If there

be, the Spirit of God is Himself personally on earth as truly, though not so manifestly, as at the commencement; for He it is who is the formative agent and guide of the church. It was He that baptised Jews and Gentiles into one body. It was He that was to abide for ever. The church, properly so called, began then as an accomplished fact (see Acts 1:5, and 1 Cor. 12:13); for one speaks not of the hidden purpose of God. Pentecost first saw her dowered with the promise of the Father.

Believers of course there had been before, as we know, from Abel downwards; but, though quickened of the Spirit, they were not baptised of Him, they had not Him dwelling in them, like the saints after Pentecost. This was the precious privilege, for which it was expedient that Christ should go away: “for if I go not away, the Comforter (or Advocate) will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you” (John 16:7). It could not be till Jesus was glorified (John 7:39). But when sent down from heaven, the Spirit of truth was to be in them, and to abide with them for ever. “ And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:16, 17).

It is the owning, then, of the Holy Ghost as Christ’s vicar, as the really present, sole, and sufficient Paraclete or Advocate in the church during our Lord’s absence, which is our special responsibility, and ought to be a leading feature in our testimony as Christians.

This cardinal truth of the presence of the Holy Spirit in and with the church has these two immensely important consequences: —

I. It is not by baptism, infant or adult;3 it is not by the adoption of this or that article or creed; it is “by one Spirit,” the Holy Spirit of God, “we are all” (i.e., all of us believers) “baptised into one body” (1 Cor. 12, 13). It is, if one may be allowed so to say reverently, the highest qualification which God can impart — the baptising by the Holy Spirit Himself of the blood-washed believer — which introduces into the one body, the body of Christ. But this is the privilege of all true Christians. Nothing therefore short of a platform such as in principle to admit all Christians, and Christians only, can satisfy faith, because nothing short of this satisfies the Spirit of God. When it is said, “Christians only,” it is meant, so far as man guided by the word and Spirit of God can discern. If they are hypocrites, they will be made manifest in His own good time.

2. After the apostle has discussed the confession of the Lordship of Jesus by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3), which is the foundation of everything here, he shows that there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; diversities of services, but the same Lord; and diversities of operations, but the same God working all in all. Then in 7-11 he enters into the detail of these manifestations of the Spirit. It is given to each for common profit; whether the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, etc.: different manifestations, “but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.” Now, while it is confessed that some or many of the exterior gifts are no more found, it must be here affirmed that this does not in the smallest degree

negative the truth that the Spirit Himself does abide. But if He abides, has He resigned His functions? If even in these days, when pride cannot cloak the spiritual declension it so vainly strives to deny, if still one Christian has “the word of wisdom,” and another has “the word of knowledge,” is it from the Spirit of God, or from some other spirit? “What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:11). Can it be mere man’s wisdom now? or is there such a thing as the teaching of the Holy Spirit?

It may be assumed, I trust, that the Christians who read this paper believe that there is still real power to evangelise the world and to edify the church. If so, whence comes it? The natural man knows nothing but natural things, and can neither receive nor communicate the things of the Spirit of God. Real, spiritual power is of Him. Who of us believers is not a witness that this power still continues? Weakened and blunted, alas! it is; for He who works is grieved with all the sin, and confusion, and desolation around Him. But He does abide, and His power abides, and the way in which He acts, according to the scripture cited, is “dividing to every man severally as he will.” Clearly then He uses whom He pleases. It is no humanly divided caste that He employs to be the narrow and exclusive channel of His blessing. No: He does not vacate His sovereignty. It is not the pleasure, therefore, of a preacher, nor of a synod of preachers, nor of a congregation, nor of a sect, nay, nor of the true church, much less of a worldly power. It is the Spirit of God. And He divides as He will. Again He divides to each, or every man (i.e., inside the church), not this or

that particular gift; but He does divide something for the common good — “to every man severally as he will.”

Hence the order and action of the church, as described in scripture, depend upon the presence and the operations of the Holy Ghost. And if He be allowed free scope to work, it is, if we are in truth to follow God’s word, according to the pattern of “many members, yet but one body.” He acts in he unity of the whole body. After this manner we shall find His testimony regulated, as is plain from the Acts and Epistles: and this, whether inside or outside the church.

As for the testimony to those without, compare Acts 8:1, 4; Acts 11:20; Acts 18:24-28; and Phil. 1:14. The mass or main part of the church, scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, went everywhere preaching the gospel. Among them Philip was conspicuous in Samaria and elsewhere. If it be said that he was officially set apart, the answer is, It was to serve tables, not to preach the word of God. The office was instituted that the twelve, relieved from care touching this business, might give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word. If Philip preached with power, if Stephen disputed with irresistible wisdom, and if both wrought miracles, none of these things was in virtue of an appointment which related simply and specifically to the daily ministration. Compare Acts 6:6 with Acts 4:35. Further, others of those dispersed “travelled as far as Phoenicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they were come to Antioch, spoke unto the Grecians (or rather Greeks), preaching the Lord Jesus.” Did these brethren assume what was unjustifiable? Were they reproved even by the

church at Jerusalem, ready as many there always were to censure what seemed irregular? “Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem; and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch; who, when he came and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord” (Acts 11:22-24).

At a later period “Apollos spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord:” and this, when he knew only the baptism of John. Instructed more perfectly, through the instrumentality of a believer and his wife, who were as unauthorised as himself, he is soon found more active and honoured than ever: “he helped them much which had believed through grace; for he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ” (Acts 18). At Rome, the most in the Lord, waxing confident by the bonds of Paul, were much more bold to speak the word without fear. It is true the motives of all were not good; but this is a danger which no human restriction could ward off. Alas! motives baser even than these were necessarily introduced, when the so-called ministry of Christ became synonymous with a regular, respectable, and in some cases lucrative profession. It was not so in apostolic days; yet even then, there were those who preached Christ of envy and strife, as well as others who preached of good will. What then, says the large-hearted apostle? Does he propose to fetter that blessed liberty, because it was now abused by these unholy feelings? Nothing of the sort. “Notwithstanding every way,” says

he, “whether in pretext or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and I will rejoice.” (Phil. 1:18)

I need not quote other scriptures less direct, but equally showing that doctrine, not ordination, is the divine test for rejecting or receiving those who profess to be ministers of Christ. It is clear that several passages have been adduced which prove that such Christians as can are at liberty, not to say are bound, to preach the gospel. Not one text can be brought forward which contradicts, limits, or qualifies the principle. Scripture never prescribes a human commission as a necessary preliminary to that work. On the contrary, the parable of the talents in Matt. 25 teaches, by its solemn judgment, the danger of waiting for other warrant than the fact that the Lord delivers to the servants His goods, wherewith they are responsible to trade. To doubt the grace of the Master, to fear because one has not the authentication of those who presumptuously claim and trifle with His right, to bury the talent in the earth, is to act the part of the wicked and slothful servant. For the Lord of the harvest, to use another parable, has alone the title to send forth labourers (compare Matt. 10 and Rom. 10). In a word, the question is not whether all Christians are qualified of God to preach the gospel, but whether those who are so qualified may not preach without waiting for any human authoritative call. Scripture, we have seen, decides that they may.

As for the testimony to those within, 1 Cor. 14 shows plainly, that the only restriction upon the exercise of gifts by brethren was this: “ Let all things be done unto edifying.” Women were positively forbidden to speak in the churches. Elsewhere they were responsible to use

whatever gift the Lord imparted to them, subject to His word. Thus Priscilla, no less than Aquila, takes Apollos and expounds to him the word of God more perfectly (Acts 18:26). And the four daughters of Philip did prophesy (Acts 21:9), but not in the assemblies: the Spirit forbad that (1 Cor. 14:34, 35). A woman was not suffered to teach nor to exercise authority over the man (1 Tim; 2:12). But all the brethren, as a whole, were exhorted thus — “follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.” And of course they were to exercise their gifts as God empowered them, so that all things were done decently and in order.

Hence it is that James says (James 3:1), “My brethren be not many masters” (i.e., “teachers”), an exhortation as entirely out of place in modern arrangements, as it was suitable, wholesome, and needed in their case whom he addressed: an exhortation which manifestly implied that there was an open ministry, which might very possibly be abused by the flesh, but which the Spirit, instead of closing or restricting, turned to the good of their souls by pressing upon them their direct responsibility to God. On the other hand, the entire family of God are exhorted not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits whether they are of God because many false prophets were gone out into the world (1 John 4:1). Even the elect lady (2 John 10) is told that if any come and bring not the doctrine of Christ, he is not to be received. Those who hear, as well as those who teach, have need to take heed. Responsibility is maintained on all sides: from this none can escape.

In Rom. 12 we have the same thing, though from another point of view. “For I say, through the grace

given unto me, to every one that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, [let us prophesy] according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, [let us wait] on our ministry; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, [let him do it] with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness." God's dealing to each was looked to, and not a mere human commission to one, or to a few. Hence faith came in, and each is exhorted to think soberly of himself, and to use what God has given him instead of pretending to more. We see not one member absorbing all the gifts, or hindering others, but many members, and yet but one body, having gifts differing, and exhorted to employ them, not merely through love, because we are every one members one of another, but because of the grace given on God's part.

So in Eph. 4:4-16: "[There is] one body and one Spirit.... But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ...., from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Col. 2:19 is to the same effect:... "the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God."

Again, 1 Peter 4:9, 10 makes it a matter of positive obligation that “as each one hath received the gift,” even so they should minister the same one to another. Thus, and thus only, should they be “good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” “If any one speak, let him speak as oracles of God: if any one 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.” Can anything more clearly show that mere human acquirement is of no value, while the idea of human restriction is perfectly shut out? Whatever came from God and nothing else, was to be used and received without further sanction, that God might be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ.

From these scriptures we learn also that the gifts from above were for the blessing of the whole body of Christ: not one for one particular section of the church, and another for another; but all open to the whole church, and the whole church open to all.

Thus, according to the divine plan, if I am a member of the church at all, I am a member of the church everywhere. If I go to any quarter of the world where saints call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, I am a member, not by permission nor by courtesy, but by the universal recognition, on the part of believers, of the title which grace has given me. Baptised by the Spirit, I am a member of Christ’s body, wheresoever I may be. In apostolic days that membership, and none other, was known throughout. There might be differences of view. There might be need of the word, “Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.” Some might eat herbs, and some

might eat meat; but the Spirit said, and says, “Receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.” Now the glory of God is identified, not with some, but with all the members of the body of Christ. If the weakest member therefore were excluded, save in case of necessary scriptural discipline, so far would that glory be forgotten or despised; and those guilty of such exclusion ought to be avoided, as causers of divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which we learned.

As is the ground of membership, so it is of ministry. It is of God’s Spirit. If not, it is nothing or worse, and ought to be so treated by all those who honour God rather than man. If a Christian be an evangelist, he is so everywhere, and not restricted to this or that district, congregation, or chapel. If he be a teacher or a pastor, or both, he of course exercises his gift where he usually resides. But then he is not the teacher, but a teacher:4 and he is a teacher in the church, and not in a church. “We,” says the apostle, writing to far distant saints whom as yet he had not seen — we, “being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” He is not speaking of what was to be in heaven, but of what actually was on earth, the unity of Christ’s body here below. “Having then gifts differing,” etc.

So (1 Cor. 3). in meeting the carnal, because exclusive, preference of one servant of Christ above another, the apostle presses the broad and blessed truth, “All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas,” etc. It was a sectarian spirit in respect of those who ministered that Paul rebuked.

It is the same principle in 1 Cor. 12:18-28: “But now God set the members each one of them in the body, as it

pleased [him]. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of you. Nor, again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: and those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour: and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness; but our comely parts have no need. But God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles; then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." "God set some in the church," not in a church. Viewed as churches, apostles could be in but few. There were none in the church at Corinth when Paul wrote. Teachers stand clearly on the same base: apostles in the church, teachers in the church.

Again, in Eph. 4:11-16, whether apostles, or prophets, whether evangelists, or pastors and teachers, they are given of Christ, not to be the solitary officials of a denomination, but "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come," etc. Verse 16 tells us that it is "the whole body fitly joined together," not broken into sects; the whole body "compacted by that which every

joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part”: a practical thing, and not a mere theory, a thing meant to be in the church while on earth, and not at all referring to heaven. We shall not need such ministration there. In this passage there is also, I would notice, a warrant to faith for expecting the continuance of the gifts of Christ till His body be completed. And of a truth He has never failed during all the long years of ruin in which His gifts were well-nigh smothered, as they were too really and painfully misused.

For I fully recognise that there have been even in popery, in her clergy and laity, those who had gifts of God’s grace to build up His own people, and to spread Christ’s name among sinners. But, at the same time, I as utterly deny that they were Christ’s gifts in virtue of the commission which popery conferred, any more than that others were not His gifts for the want of such a commission. The same remark, I need hardly add, extends still more widely to modern Protestantism. Would to God that the tender love of Christ, in thus cherishing the church as His own flesh, might touch a chord in all His members, that together we might weep over our common sin, and that together we might rejoice, extolling the grace that has abounded but the more!

There is, however, a distinction to be observed, which cannot be forgotten without injury. When the body came together as such, the assembly was under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. It would have trenched upon the right of Christ for any individual, however gifted he might be, to absorb the regulation of it into his own hands. The Giver is there, and He is looked to, not the gifts merely.

The order of such an assembly is definitely laid down in scripture (1 Cor. 14). “Ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.” “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write unto you are the commandment of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant. Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order.

It is quite a different principle which governs a servant of the Lord in the exercise of whatever talent has been entrusted to him. He owes an immediate and individual responsibility to Christ to trade with it. He may preach to the unconverted, or he may instruct more perfectly the children of God, or both, if he possess both gifts. He owes it to his Master to exercise all he has received for the good of souls, hindering and hindered by no one else. Every servant, be his gift great or small, has the same liberty and the same responsibility. Two or more may see it good to associate in the ministry; but let us remember that if Paul chose Silas, recommended to the grace of God, Barnabas took Mark; and we do not read that he was thus honoured of God in confirming the churches (Acts 15:36-41). Liberty is not licence. The servant is free of man, but bound to obey the Lord; and his brethren are no less bound to judge his disobedience.

These gifts, let it be borne in mind, must be kept distinct from local charges, such as the elders5 or presbyters of scripture, which are ever regarded there as the same with the bishops, or overseers, as indeed Cranmer and others allow, whose practice was totally different. The charges had to do with some one church, and were

appointed by an apostle, or by a delegate possessed of a direct and special commission from an apostle to that end. Such a delegate was Titus. But scripture nowhere intimates that authority for appointing elders was meant to continue. We have seen that the gifts of Christ were to be “till we all come,” etc. But scripture never confounds them with local charges, although both clearly might co-exist in the same individual. We know this to have been Philip’s case, who was one of “the seven,” and an evangelist besides.

Pastorship, to come still closer, is a gift (Eph. 4:11), eldership is a charge; but the gift of feeding the flock of God, so far from being incompatible with the office of an elder or bishop, was evidently one of the most important qualifications sought in those who desired that good work. Thus Paul (Acts 20:28) exhorts the Ephesian elders to take heed to themselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers (bishops, ἐπισκόπους), to feed the church of God which He had purchased with His own blood. “Feed the flock of God,” said another apostle, “which is among you, taking the oversight thereof (ἐπισκοποῦντες) not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over their allotments,6 but being ensamples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:2, 3).

In the First Epistle to Timothy (3) we find aptness to teach and ability to take care of the church of God among other requisites. Titus too (1:5-9) was told to ordain such as held fast the faithful word, as he had been taught, that he might be able by sound doctrine to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. But it would be too much to draw thence that all the elders necessarily laboured in the public ministration of the word. They

were appointed to exercise a godly fatherly care over the church; but labouring in the word and doctrine was not an indispensable adjunct. Hence the apostle says, in 1 Tim. 5:17, “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.” In one way or another, all elders were assumed to feed the flock; but there might be elders who did not serve, at least publicly, in the word: a principle recognised in the Presbyterian system.

Another remark is to be made on the question of rulers. Paul, in writing to the saints at Rome, exhorts “him that ruleth” to do it with simplicity. Now all the evidence we have goes to show that there was no official nomination as yet, if ever at Rome. Peter’s primacy there is a dream, scripture affirming in a positive way that he was distinctively the apostle of the circumcision, as Paul was of the uncircumcision. Now the latter had not yet visited the faithful in the Gentile metropolis. Accordingly there is not a word which supposes elders to have been appointed there. Nevertheless it is evident that those at Rome, like the rest of the church, had gifts of grace in their midst — prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhorting, ruling, etc. These they might possess, and they are exhorted to use diligently; but not a word is said about elders. It has already been observed that at Corinth no elders are even implied, and yet the brethren were besought to submit themselves to such as addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints, and to every one co-working and labouring.

Again, in 1 Thess. 5:12, 13, “We beseech you, brethren, to know them that labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake.” Do not the

exhortations “to know” them which labour and rule and preside (the same word as in Rom. 12:8), suggest the thought that it was not a class officially appointed? Office must have been self-evident, and therefore would render needless an exhortation to recognise such labourers. The esteem and love was for their work’s sake. An official place was not alluded to. In Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24, certain chief men are named (οἱ ἡγούμενοι, leaders or guides); but there is nothing indicative of exterior appointment. It is probable that they were persons whose age, character, and gifts, gave them a certain place. See Acts 15:22.

Now if any one in our day could give satisfactory (i.e. scriptural) proof that he was an apostolic delegate, his appointment of elders ought to be respected; and respected I have no doubt it would be by all (at any rate) whose eye was single to the Lord in the matter. If such proof be wanting, they ought to be as decidedly disowned. If then in scripture we see not elders appointed by any save apostles or their delegates, can nationalism or dissent justify their respective appointments by the word of God? Apostolic succession seems to be the only consistent plea in its pretensions as to this: in its pretensions, I say, for reality it has none — it is Christianity Judaised, or rather it is Judaism Christianised (see Bingham’s Eccles. Antiq. b. i. ch. v.).

The case of Paul in Acts 13, which is sometimes referred to in proof of the necessity of a human commission, proves in fact the contrary. It would be strange indeed if it did, seeing that in Gal. 1:1 he takes such pains to insist that he was an apostle, “not of men (i.e., as the source), “nor by man” (as the channel). He had been preaching for years, before this separation by the Spirit

to the special work recorded in Acts 13, 14. Further, those who fasted and prayed and laid their hands on him and Barnabas had been cherished and taught by them, as by those who were over them in the Lord. To such an imposition of hands I know of no objection. It pretends to confer neither gift nor authority, but is a simple commendation to the grace of God, which it would seem might be repeated (Acts 15:40). Is there one feature in common with the ordination of our day and for ages? Is it possible that Christians, in order more thoroughly to justify a modern ordination by Acts 13, have pretended that Paul was only an inferior apostle, a messenger of the church — like Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25)? But see Acts 14:4; Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; 1 Cor. 9:1-6; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; Gal. 1:2; 1 and 2 Tim. 1:1; Titus 1:1; where, if we may so say, the highest form of the apostolate is claimed, and its entire independence of man.

It is too often forgotten that Matthias was chosen Jewishly, by lot, before the Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven to baptise the believers. The church, properly speaking, was not yet manifested. His election therefore can furnish no precedent for a state of things which was changed and governed by the presence of the Spirit. Nor do we read of the use of lots ever afterwards. The Moravian system, with its usual and blind servility, has tried to copy this and other forms which were peculiar to Jerusalem.

In the instance of Timothy, there were prophecies going before (1 Tim. 1:18), and an actual gift imparted by prophecy, with the imposition of the hands of the presbyters (1 Tim. 4:14), and by the imposition of Paul’s hands (2 Tim. 1:6): a case which it is not only impracticable to imitate without an apostle and duly

chosen presbytery, not to speak of prophecy, but which is a mischievous pretension, unless there is the power to bestow the gift which was bestowed then. May God deliver His people from saying, “I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing!”

Lastly, in 2 Tim. 2:2 it is evident that the question is one, not of authority to appoint successors, but of communicating the things which Timothy had heard of the apostle by many witnesses. It was not to consecrate a clergy, but to commit sound doctrine to faithful men who should be able to teach others also.

On the other hand the dissenting principle of electing a pastor is purely human, derived not even from Judaism, much less from Christianity. Hear the testimony of one who was himself thus chosen, the author of “Spiritual Despotism” (p. 153). “It is not without some amazement that we find a congregational church, on the modern scheme, proceeding in the momentous act of creating or electing to itself a pastor and teacher, without being able to allege from the New Testament any law or licence to that effect, or any one example, satisfactory or unsatisfactory..... On secular principles nothing can be more simple or reasonable than that those who pay should command; and in the present temper of mankind, especially in certain circles, it may be nearly impracticable to secure submission to any other law. Nevertheless this serious question returns upon us, Is this the law or this the principle recognised as the basis of church policy in the New Testament? We are compelled to answer, It is not.”

Yet some have professed to see it in Acts 14:23; “When they had ordained (or chosen, as seems better) them

elders in every church." But this proves not that the church, but that they (i.e., Paul and Barnabas) chose the elders. Some argue from the etymology; but usage, not etymology, is the only safe guide. The word (χειροτονέω) meant originally to stretch out the hand. Hence, it was applied to voting in this manner, and by an easy transition to choosing without reference to the manner. Thus in Acts 10:41 the same word, compounded with a preposition, is applied to God's choice, where the notion of the church's voting is of course excluded. When it was a question of a gracious and prudent use of tables, or the like, as in Acts 6 and 2 Cor. 8:19, the assembly, or assemblies, did choose; though even in Acts, if the multitude of the disciples looked out seven faithful men, it was the apostles who appointed them over their business. In short, when God imparts a gift, He chooses; when the church gives what she can, she may employ what instrument seems to her fitting. As she cannot bestow a ministerial gift, neither ought she to choose, but to receive all those whom God has given for her good.

As to elders, then, an apostle chooses (Acts 14:23) or leaves a delegate for a season during his own life to appoint them (Titus 1:5-9), or describes to another the requisite qualities (1 Tim. 3:2-7). In no case is the church invited to select them. The saints had no such authority, even in their brightest days. No epistle addressed to a church touches the question, and fitly so. It was not their mission. Titus was left in Crete expressly to set in order what the apostle had left undone, and to appoint elders in every city, as the apostle had appointed him and none else.

Afterwards he was to come to the apostle in Nicopolis (Titus 3:12). You cannot have the one without the other. This is the sum of what scripture states, unless we add the “angels” of the seven churches in the Book of Revelation. But “angel” is neither a gift nor a charge, but a moral representative of each church, and only introduced for special purpose in this great prophecy. Hence all systems with almost equal unreality try to fit in the “angel” to suit their aim. It applies in fact to no such thing, but to the introduction of a judicial book. The apostle looked, and taught the church to look, for the coming of the Lord as their immediate hope. This of course stimulated and in no way hindered present care for the sheep; but it was inconsistent with perpetuating official organs for ages to come. Accordingly we find no such arrangements in the Epistles.

But as for gifts they rest on quite another ground; not upon apostles who might be removed, but upon Christ, who never ceases to be the head and source of nourishment, and cannot but love and cherish His body the church. These gifts never needed man’s sanction, even when apostles lived. Christ dealt them without the intervention of any; so that what Paul said of his own apostolate might be said in principle of them all, “Not of men, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.” I speak of course of the manner and source of the gifts, not of their measure.

As regards discipline, it is of the utmost importance to bear in mind that it does not depend on gifts, offices, or any other thing than the blessed fact that the body, the church, is Christ’s body, is gathered in His name, and has the Holy Ghost present to guide and energise its

movements. He is, we may say, the soul of this holy and heavenly body. Hence the fullest directions respecting discipline, either in putting away or in restoring, were given to the Corinthian church, where it would seem there were at the time no elders. That there might be and were churches without elders is manifest from Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5. The churches existed before any such charges were appointed. Elders were desirable no doubt for the administration of a church, but by no means indispensable to its being. Certain it is that at Corinth elders are not alluded to, and the disorders which broke out there are pressed home on the entire body. Nor does the Spirit, in correcting the abuses, suspend their functions as a church until elders were duly appointed. On the contrary, whether it be the extreme and solemn act of excision, or the worthy celebration of the Lord's Supper, it is the body which is addressed, rebuked, and charged with ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well, in all these grave particulars. And this is the more striking, as it is clear that there were among them those who came behind in no gift (1 Cor. 1:7); that, at any rate, the household of Stephanas addicted7 themselves to the ministry of the saints, and that the believers in general are besought to submit themselves to such. It is not the labourers, I repeat, but the body which is appealed to in matters which the common consent of a fallen church has made the peculiar and distinguishing province of the clerical or ministerial order.

Doubtless where overseers were, as at Philippi or Ephesus, they in their exercise of a godly care would naturally and justly have a large share of the practical details; and the more so as an appeal to the church is

the last and most painful resort (Matt. 18:15-17), the urgent object being to restore the soul, if so it may be in the Lord. But the known sin of a Christian affects the conscience of the body, for it is one body; and if not judged, a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. If the offender mourn and depart from the evil after a godly sort, he is restored, and all rejoice; if he continue in that which dishonours Christ, the body must be cleared at all cost. “Purge out, therefore, the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth,.... For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Put away from among yourselves the wicked person.”

Further, scripture even more sternly deals with false doctrine; because it is subtle, more poisonous in its effects, and touches the Lord Himself more directly than a bad walk. It is ever a work of the flesh, and may be emphatically of Satan far more than a mere carnal spirit of action. (See Gal. 5:9-21; Rom, 16:17, 18; 1 Tim. 1:18-20; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; 2 Tim. 2:23-26; 2 Tim. 3:6; 2 Tim. 4:3, 4; Titus 3:9-11; 1 John 4:1-6; 2 John 10, 11; Rev. 2:14, 15, 23, 24).

As it is the body which puts away, so it is equally for the body, under His direction Who dwells therein, to restore. God may use the instruments He sees fit to rouse the body to a remembrance of Christ’s holiness in excluding a wicked person (1 Cor. 5), and of Christ’s grace in forgiving and restoring a repentant brother (2 Cor. 2). In either case it is the conscientious action of the body

which the Lord expects. If everything fail to awaken — if, in spite of patient testimony, the assembly persist in doing or cloaking evil, and so in tarnishing the Lord's name, the claim to be His body becomes null and void. It is an entirely corrupt lump, from which the Spirit, who loves Christ, would have us to separate, instead of wasting our energies in the effort to amend that which is irremediable, and only waiting for the judgment of the Lord.

There remains but one more difficulty for us to state and seek to remove. It has been supposed that the assertion of the failure of the church forces us to say that we in these last days cannot have recourse to the Epistles to the Corinthians, etc.; and so to fall back upon the promise — "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst." The present pamphlet of itself is a sufficient answer to as hardy a charge as could well be made. It has been proved that nationalism and dissent cannot defend the principles of their membership or of their ministry by such scriptures as 1 Cor. 1, 3, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16; Eph. 4, etc. The great truth of the church as being God's habitation through the Spirit, Who is the sole energy and distributor of the gifts of Christ in the unity of the whole body, is recognised by neither; it could not be practically owned for one moment without condemning both in all their varieties. Are all our brethren responsible to own this truth whatever may be the results of their confession? If they are not, let it be openly said.

But if the church once lived, rejoiced, suffered, in realising the blessedness of such a place, where and what are we? Are we not to feel, are we not to confess, are we not to have done with, all the evil known to us,

which has overspread the professing body and made it a witness against Christ, not for Him? If I find myself honouring as the church of God a society or system whose laws are inconsistent with the leading scriptural principles of that church, am I not to confess my sin, and come out from the unclean thing? or am I to abide and sin on, that grace may abound? This is the true question.

It is now admitted by almost every Christian of moderate spirituality and intelligence, that the existing ecclesiastical condition, national or dissenting, is not to be defended, if we compare it with the word of God. Not merely in the detail is it wrong, but in its fundamental principles. Hence it is that some eminent names in the religious world boldly avow that the word of God, though perfect as regards individual justification, leaves men to their own discretion in the formation and government of churches: virtually they say we ought not to have recourse to such Epistles as 1 Cor. etc. for the present direction. One party is satisfied with things as they are; another yearns for a church of the future, wherein man may have things on a grander scale.

But if the saint of God shrinks from so fearful a principle as casting away the word of God which displays and demonstrates the infidelity of the church to its calling, what is he to do? Can a Christian hesitate? Is he not at once to cease from the evil he feels, and to humble himself before God for the failure of himself and the church? And if he knows two or three disciples meeting in Christ’s name and opening the door wide that the Holy Ghost may act holily and fully, according to the blessed word He has written and by whom He will, will he not gladly find himself there? Instead of using Matt. 18:20 as a licence to do what is right in their own eyes,

will they not thus gathered, learn to their joy that Jesus is ever faithful? Will they not bless God for the authority and sufficiency of His blessed word? and, if there be any difference, for the proved comfort and living applicability of the very scriptures, which their adversaries say they cannot have recourse to? Will they not afresh thank Him for the Holy Ghost, Who loves to act in the body as well as in the members, to the glory of the Lord Jesus?

It is God we need, it is the living God we have to do with, and not principles merely. His presence only can give power and blessing, even when the principles are right in themselves. This is what we seek, knowing that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

W. K.

1 The Evangelical Alliance — which I believe to be a result, however imperfect, of the testimony at home and abroad to the present ruin of the church — is, in fact, an acknowledgment that there is no such union avowed and acted on in modern Christianity. It is really therefore, a confession on the part of its members that they feel dissatisfied with their respective systems: for obviously, if any one system among Protestants had been according to the mind of God, there would have been no need of the Evangelical Alliance. Now it is remarkable, and ought to be known more widely, that the most able and spiritual of its Continental advocates has publicly allowed, not only that he regrets the constitution of the Alliance, but that the above ground is a better one. Compare pp. 12 and 38 of the “Alliance Evangelique (Section de la Langue Francaise, Paris, 1847).” “Cela dit, si l’on nous demande: n’avez vous pas des doutes

sur la convenance d'une base dogmatique? ou tout au moins, ne regrettez vous pas que tel ou tel article ait trouvé entrée dans cette base? Nous répondons: oui, dans ces deux cas, et surtout dans le second. Nous avons lutté même pour notre part contre les articles en question. Mais la grande majorité de l'assemblée ayant été d'un avis contrairs au nôtre, nous nous sommes rendus, soit parce que nous estimons possible que d'autres voient mieux que nous, soit aussi parce qu'à defaut de ce qui nous paraît le meilleur nous sommes d'avis de 'retenir ce qui est bon.'"

2 When we speak of the ruin of the church, it is not meant that the church does not exist upon the earth. On the contrary, if it did not exist upon the earth, it could not be in any such condition. The phrase is similar to that which is applied to a man of broken fortune. Men say, "He is a ruined man." Of course it is understood that the man exists. So it is with the present state of the church. That state doubtless occasions difficulties; for many things are not as they ought to be, nor as they once were. But the word and Spirit of God are for eternal service, and suffice for every emergency. "If therefore thine eye be single, they whole body shall be full of light: but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." The humble and obedient heart will never lack divine guidance.

3 It is not denied that baptism was the outward sign or manifestation of a confessor of Christ. Only it is important to remember that a believer was not baptised as a member of any particular assembly. Recognised by baptism as a confessor of Christ, one naturally sought communion where one happened to be, if there was an assembly there; and the Lord's supper was the

constantly-recurring outward pledge and symbol of union and communion. “For we, being many, are one bread, one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread “ (1 Cor. 10:17). It may be added here, that those who preached in no way regarded baptism or the Lord’s supper as rites to be administered necessarily by them. Thus Peter commanded Cornelius and his friends to be baptised in the name of the Lord (Acts 10:48); and Paul writes, “Christ sent me, not to baptise, but to preach the gospel” (1 Cor. 1:17). He says this markedly as to the Corinthians, and many of them, we know, believed and were baptised (Acts 18:8); so that other brethren must have acted in this service. As to the Lord’s supper, the same thing is as plain, if not more so. In fact the idea of an authorised person to break the bread does not occur, nor anything that I know which gives a colour to it, in the New Testament. See Acts 20:7, also 1 Cor. 11, where if under any circumstances, there might have seemed the need of some restraint; for the Corinthians had turned the table to fleshly licence. But while the Spirit reproves the evil, and presses the holy and solemn character of the feast, He leaves the manner of its celebration as unrestricted as ever. It is the saints as a body who are in His view, and not a privileged class who claim the administration as their right. Circumstances apart, as for the example in the case of a novice, any brother was competent to baptise or to break the bread.

4 In the church at Antioch there were at least five prophets and teachers (Acts 13:1).

5 In Acts 11:30 they are mentioned for the first time in connection with the church at Jerusalem. They are prominent at the council in Acts 15; but not a hint is dropped in the Acts touching their appointment, if they

really had any outward authorisation. James 5:14 mentions the elders; and Peter (1 Peter 5:1) and John (2nd and 3rd Epistles) call themselves elders, but do not speak of official establishment. This appears to be confirmed by the way in which the elders are in one place contrasted with the “younger” (1 Peter 5:1, 5). Experience is in question, and moral weight to guide.

6 Into this wrong Christendom has long grievously fallen, nationalists or dissenters, and in so-called Catholic times. Their ministers and pastors do regard the parish its congregation, etc., as their allotments. “Do you belong to the Rev. So-and-So’s church? I am of such anothers’.” Thus is “the flock of God” overlooked and nullified.

7 The word is ἔταξαν, and means that they set, appointed, or devoted themselves to the ministry. It is one of the words sometimes translated “ordained.” Let those who have not scrupled to ridicule “self-appointment “ weigh this passage, and remember that what they despise, as some carnal Corinthians may have done, the Holy Ghost by the apostle distinctly and unqualifiedly commends. If they will obey God, let them be subject to such.

Gathered unto His Name

A letter somewhat revised and enlarged

My Dear Brother,

I am but one of many who are praying the Lord to make Him your first object in your service of His name. There are far more who, if they knew the circumstances, would join in this, and not least some who are very devoted in the gospel work.

But they justly feel that it is Christ who gives every thing and every one due measure of importance in God's sight, and therefore in His children's, as in itself too.

Now Christ loved the church supremely and gave Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it, having purified it by the washing of water by the word, that He might present to Himself the church glorious, having no spot or wrinkle or any of such things, but that it might be holy and blameless. That He came to seek and save the lost is most true and blessed; but nothing is nearer to His heart, next to His Father and ours, to His God and ours, than His body the church, now exposed to every snare and danger in the present evil age. For that precious object is a spectacle to the world, both to angels and men, in order that now to the principalities and authorities in the heavenly places might be made known through it the manifold wisdom of God.

If you weigh this and far more which may occur to you throughout the New Testament, you will allow that the duty to the Lord in caring for poor sinners ought not to swamp the yet higher one of loving His own that are in the world, as He did to the end. And how can we do it

better than keeping His word and not denying His name, urging others in faith and love to do the same?

Men speak of the necessity of organisation but they know not or overlook that God has Himself taken this into His own hands, and has already effected it. So we read in Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4:1-16; Col. 2:19; and 1 Peter 4:10, 11. It is therefore glaring presumption for men to pretend to such a work; nor this only, but unwitting contempt for what God has done. Human responsibility has failed to preserve intact the treasure: the church no longer walks in unity. Even in apostolic days we hear of schisms and divisions, nay of sects. The Gentile ceased to stand through faith, and became high-minded instead of fearing. Thus abiding not in goodness, the sentence was to be cut off as the Jew had been (Rom. 11).

Ecclesiastical history, though miserably undiscerning as to the Lord's way and will, is forced to own, not only heterodox parties, some of them numerous and wide-spread, but the church of the west antagonistic openly and for a long while to that of the east on a trivial question, aggravated later by a graver dogmatic difference after the original breach was healed at the council of Nice in A.D. 325. For how utterly sad to make a public breach about the time of observing the Pasch (or, Easter, as it was called later)? But the saddest fact of all was the church's observance of it at any time, whether when the Asiatics celebrated it, or as the Romans did. It was a return, as Gal. 4 had ruled, to the beggarly elements of the world. In east or in west the church judaised beyond all recovery. At length came the Reformation, which gave occasion to national churches so-called, and subsequently to nonconformist bodies. No

wonder that Augustine's idea of the invisible church revived and prevailed among Protestants.

Throughout this system of change, ancient or modern, the assembly of God was let slip in principle and in practice. By baptism of water individuals were outwardly recognised as Christians by the power, or in virtue, of one Spirit were they all baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, and were all given to drink of one Spirit. Justification by faith absorbed men just escaped from the idolatries and darkness of Romanism; so that none need wonder, that even the most advanced of the reformed were as ignorant of God's church as they were of the coming and of the day of the Lord. Of this their writings are the most conclusive proof; whether of Luther, Zwingle, and Calvin; or of Knox, Cranmer, and any other.

It is the fact that only since the first quarter of the last century was it given to any by grace to discard human tradition and return to apostolic truth and fellowship. As they recognised one another simply as members of Christ in the light of His glory on high and in the hope of His coming whom God raised from the dead, their Deliverer from the wrath to come, they learnt as never before the "one body and one Spirit." More and more they realised its blessedness, and sought to conform their ways, individual or collective, to the divine word which revealed this, the calling of all Christians (Col. 3:15). No doubt grievous departure came to pass, early and recent. But are there none that hold fast, whatever it may cost? Let saints judge by the word and Spirit of God, and be faithful themselves if they can find none else obedient.

God formed the assembly by the presence of the Holy Spirit on and since Pentecost. The body is therefore one; and it subsists to the end in that divine constitution. “God set the members each one in the body even as He pleased” (1 Cor. 12:18). “Now ye are Christ’s body” (could the apostle say to the Corinthian assembly, and the same thing was true everywhere else of the like), “and members in particular” (ver. 27). “And God set some in the assembly: first, apostles; secondly, prophets; thirdly, teachers; then, powers; then, gifts of healings; helps; governments; kinds of tongues” (28). Eph. 2:20 lets us know that we were built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, who, as they did their work perfectly by divine power, were not continued. But all is given that is needed for the perfecting of the saints, unto ministerial work, unto building up of the body of Christ, until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God. Hence sign-gifts also soon ceased, such as miraculous powers, and tongues with their interpretations. But as God fails not in His grace, so we have nothing to add to His guaranteed gifts. We have only to walk in faith ourselves, and accept gratefully what He gives, recognising all by His word and Spirit.

There is also another difficulty. Local charges, elders, in order to have full authority, needed institution by an apostle or an apostolic delegate like Titus to choose or establish them. Compare Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5, and probably 1 Tim. 5:22. But scripture provided for the lack of the completely regular appointment by such considerations as are suggested in 1 Cor. 16:15, 16; 1 Thess. 5:12, 13; Heb. 13:7, 17, 24. If there be not apostolic nomination, there are among the saints such

as possess the qualities requisite for elders; and, appointed or not, such men are to be held in due honour and deference by all who fear God. A human or unscriptural title would lend no spiritual weight. But churches, as any one may see, are fully recognised as in the Epistles to the Romans, the Corinthians, and the Thessalonians, where we do not read of elders as yet existing in their midst.

Take the quite simple yet most affecting and very important duty of remembering Him on the first day of the week in the breaking of the bread, His supper. No doubt you are well aware how greatly this institution differs from what all Romanists and Protestants have perverted it to, as a sacrament with its priest or the minister set officially apart to administer it. You have learnt too that there is now also the added truth, in the standing and precious privileges of the church, that the Holy Spirit, Who baptised into one body, abides for ever in and with those that are Christ's, to work in them of His own will, one or another in all liberty, to glorify the Lord Jesus.

It was because Christendom had fallen away from those essential truths, here merely and briefly sketched, that a few (separating themselves from all denominational membership, as being but sects and denounced in God's word) met with little but growing light to begin, as the early disciples began, gathered to His name, to show His death till He come, and to recognise the abiding presence of the Spirit in the assembly, even if but two or three were thus faithful. They were not nor could be satisfied with an approach or a partial resemblance. They rightly felt that they must be faithful and do the

will of the Lord. To this the Christian is sanctified by the Spirit.

When I was in C- through serious ill heath, it was a great joy that we could meet, if ever so few, as gathered to the Lord's name. The dear few met there, Mrs.- giving the use of a fitting room in her house; and if visiting brothers and sisters came to the town, they gladly enjoyed the privilege in a foreign land. And I remember a sister who was Mrs.-'s guest (a Lutheran if I mistake not, and certainly not in our communion) who was not refused but welcomed in the Lord's name. She had not learnt that Lutheranism is but a sect; yet she loved the Lord's name and word as far as she knew; and we could and did therefore heartily give her the right hand of fellowship.

I left when most leave, the heat becoming an injury to invalids at any rate; and the meeting fell through, because there was none but one brother (his wife being sometimes unable to come). And I understand that, knowing you were in communion, Mrs.- appealed to you in this strait. For it was a very sad thing that there was indeed no place in the town where they could break bread with a good conscience. It seems that you pleaded not being at home in French, so as to express yourself in prayer or worship fittingly. But when you acquired familiarity enough to preach the gospel to the world, you did not remove the difficulty by remembering the Lord with them according to His word. Apparently you had got interested in evangelising work, so as to overlook the infinite claim of Christ on you as a member of His body, and all the more because they were so few and so circumstanced, that your holding aloof precluded their thus honouring Him scripturally.

If this state of things be substantially true, I earnestly appeal to you in the Lord's name. Help with all your heart that which is manifestly due to Him and His alone. Ought not you and they to keep His word at all cost? Mr.- I know; for he often came to readings at Mrs.-'s on the First Epistle of John; and I doubt not that he has otherwise received light beyond most in his society, preaching the gospel too as not a few do indefatigably and earnestly. Still he is the minister of the Free Church (as I understood): which in no way, more than other denominations, owns God's assembly, or the Holy Spirit for action in it, as God's mind for His saints, as long as Christians, however scattered, are here below. To recognise the Free Church, or the Evangelic Church (which are what scripture calls "sects," each with its peculiar polity, ministry, doctrine, and discipline according to man's wisdom), is to compromise God's word, and to dishonour the Lord Jesus as well as the Spirit's presence and action as in 1 Cor. 12, 14. They don't pretend to carry this out, as far as is now possible, but argue against it. "All things" are not "done decently and in order," as the apostle prescribed, but as men devise for their day.

Now you, I presume, have learnt from scripture, that we are the Lord's now and for ever more. Let us help each other to be obedient. No one wishes to slight the vast moment of preaching the gospel: but honouring the Lord by doing His will helps us to preach all the better. It also makes the Spirit's action in the assembly a living reality; whereas dropping this for the gospel makes it but a dead letter. Further, one grieves Him by lack of faith about God's plain will, so as to risk the loss of all conscience about it, and to slip by degrees into any sect

or all sects, if we begin to own one that looks fairer than others, instead of adhering to the Lord's word and way exclusively.

Bear with me, beloved brother, if I urge the truth, and your debt to sovereign grace. How I should rejoice, if you prayed over this matter before God; so that when our sister returns, you might all be together gathered to the only true centre, and not in word only but in deed and truth. Thus might you prove His blessed and blessing presence in the midst of the few, be a comfort and help in the highest degree to any converted by your means, and turn a real grief we feel when we think of it into a true thanksgiving. Beware of instability like Reuben; be rather a Joseph, adding on your part all diligence, and in your faith. supply virtue, in virtue knowledge, in knowledge temperance, in temperance endurance, in endurance godliness, in godliness brotherly kindness, in brotherly kindness love.

Ever affectionately yours in our Lord,

W. K.

P.S. A few words as to the position you are tempted to take. First, it is retrograde, breaking off, not only from all dearest to you in the flesh and in the Lord, but from what you have hitherto professed to be of God. The only thing which could justify it is the imperative duty of following scripture. But we, your family included, left all to follow scripture; we abandoned our denominations or sects, forbidden by God's word. The Eglise Libre began by adopting a new code of polity which is but of yesterday, with the ordinary false position of the minister, and no assembly open to the presence and free action of the Holy Spirit, as God's word requires. Weigh

this before God; for departure into what is clearly unscriptural is most serious.

Secondly, you know that brethren as such went back to the primitive standing of God's church, gathered only unto the name of the Lord Jesus. To this we have adhered at cost of obloquy in 1880-1 and since, as your father well knew and refused with us to endorse the new departure of the Park St. party, which afterwards divided into Ravenites and Anti-Ravenites, to say nothing of the so-called Open Brethren who long before went off from us. I mention this to satisfy you that the resumption of meeting at P- is not adding a third or second meeting, but simply enabling those, now debarred by circumstances, to remember the Lord in truly scriptural simplicity. They, and they alone, would meet as all did, not only from the beginning of Brethren but from the day of Pentecost, however feeble representatives. The Lord provided for it in Matt. 18:20; and, till they meet on this divine principle, there is no true representative in C-. Think of the solemnity of this, and of your being faithful or not, my dear young friend, I beseech you.

Be sure that I will pray earnestly for you.

Yours in Him, W. K.

The Church - Eph. 4:4

There is one body." This is the church. Not that it is the whole truth of the church, which may be viewed in other aspects. We are not merely Christians, but also members of one body. Now the thoughts of Christians in general are vague as to this. They are apt to take their notions from what they have ever seen around them. But there is one unfailing standard, the word of God. A thorough acceptance of the place that God has given us according to scripture is here as elsewhere all-important.

The Son never raised the question of the church till the individual need is felt; and we find this too even in the epistle to the Ephesians He says nothing about the body of Christ till we come to the last verse of the first chapter; and yet this is pre-eminently the church epistle. He develops the full blessing of the saint first. Nor is any one able to comprehend the church safely and rightly till every individual question is settled. The soul needs to be consciously delivered, and to stand in the presence of God in the full confidence of faith. When all this is clear, the Holy Spirit begins to open out the character and relations of the church.

At Caesarea Philippi, the remotest corner of the land, Christ's assembly to replace Israel on earth is first brought before the disciples; but the truth concerning Himself takes precedence. The Lord gave Himself the name of the Son of man; and in that very character He will return and take all the world to reign over it. Peter confesses Him as the Son of God, which drew out His statement, "I also say to thee, that thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church" (or, assembly). Thus the

soul must be in the light as to Christ before the church can be a seasonable truth. The Father in this scene gives fresh knowledge of the Son's glory; and the Christian like Peter, instead of being limited to believing Israel's faith, confesses Him as the Son of the living God. It is not what He became, what He will display or what He might do, but what He is in His intrinsic and eternal title, the Son of the living God. It is His proper dignity and personal relation in the Godhead.

Here we have a rock which cannot be moved. "On this rock," said He Himself, "will I build my church." Even when Israel shall bewail their own guilt and that of their fathers, they will not know or confess Him as the Christian does. Thus we find their type in Thomas, who was not with the rest on the resurrection day, when Christ stood in their midst as the risen Man, and breathed on them the abundant life from Himself. They were reconciled to God by His death; again, their sins were blotted out by His shed blood; and now He brought them into their new standing in Himself. Thomas was not with them till eight days after, confessing Him as "my Lord and my God." This is just what the Jews will do by-and-by, owning Him as their Jehovah God, rather than as Son of the living God. This as revealed by the Father suits those who were to be in relationship with the Father, as Christians now are characteristically.

Thus are prepared the individuals in order to form the church. There is a special revelation which lets the believer into that near relationship. Let us see to it that we have our thoughts formed from scripture and truly learn what is taught us by the Holy Spirit for our own place. First the individual should be peaceful and happy in the Lord. He is an object of heavenly favour; and only

when he is consciously in that condition, is he fit to enquire what the church is. In the Catholic principle which prevailed before the Reformation, the first thought was always the church. So still, where it exists, the great thing for a soul is to be in the church, as many besides Romanists would say today. A Protestant on the contrary likes to say, It is not the church but justification by faith and an open Bible we are now to care for: there will be one body in heaven, but not here. How beneficial the denominations are to stir up one another! Alas, very sad are the devious paths of error on both sides.

Here the scripture gives the truth fully and without a cloud. According to it the individual, even if ever so moral and surrounded by Christian associations, is arrested in his sins, and by the faith of Christ through redemption set at rest in the sight of God. If not like the prodigal in evil walk and ways, he needs no less to feel his ruin, and to be met by the Father's grace. He has to do with God about his sins, and by receiving Christ and His work enters into deliverance. Alone in both as it were, he is not alone in the communion of divine love, which is the issue. Joy can sing.

No doubt there are many elder brothers in Christendom; and it annoys them to hear of joy over any thus blessed, especially if once wretched wanderers, rejoicing in the Father's presence. It is here and now that such murmurers are found. And here too begins the divine joy of love.

The Holy Spirit shows us the church on earth. Certainly and perfectly it will be in heaven also; but it is revealed as now on earth. Your faith is small if you give this up. Scripture is plain.

What or who then founded the body here below, this heavenly corporation on earth? He that first came down from heaven to accomplish redemption, and then went up on high when there was a. righteous ground, not for pardon only, but for so new and blessed a relationship. To effectuate it, Christ sent down the Spirit to dwell there as He never could before. The Spirit of God came to abide in Christ; and thus He calls His body God's temple; for the old temple was desecrated and soon to be left desolate. But the Spirit is come now to make the Christian's body a temple, and to form a body, the one body of Christ, on the earth. Believest thou this? If you doubt, search and learn. What is your standard of truth? Is it yourself or other men? It should assuredly be Christ: He only is the truth. The reason why the church of God is unknown or misunderstood is because self, in one form or another, takes the place of Christ.

By the one Spirit were we baptized into that one body. We are by Him brought as Christians into this new relationship now: and our new duties flow from that relationship. No rite could effect it, nor any act of human will. It is a divine, not a mere voluntary, society. As the Head is one and a living Head, so is the body formed by the Holy Spirit. It makes an immense difference to know whether we belong to it now; for right walk, service, and worship largely depend on that fact.

God has been blessing individuals since the day of Adam, but no such body existed then. Even Abel therefore could not be of Christ's body, nor was Abraham, David, or any O.T. saint. Let us cultivate subjection to the word, and give up popular as well as peculiar views. Is it not the path of faith to believe God's

word? When our Lord was about to depart, He said, “Tarry in Jerusalem,” etc. The same divine Spirit that dwelt in Christ dwells in His own, the same Spirit that anointed Him anoints them too. Gentiles or Jews, they are brought into anew and united position as the one body of Christ; for the Spirit sent down by the ascended Head baptized them into one. Faith in Christ beyond a doubt is the first question: till this is settled in your soul before God, you have nothing to do with the church; you are still in your sins till then; and no sponsor can believe for you. The Spirit was and is “given” to believers. Of course He first operates in and by the word to make us believers. How could the Spirit come and dwell in a man yet in his sins?’

Moreover, and as long as the Lord Jesus remained here, instead of ascending, there could not begin any such new and heavenly relationship. Nor could any basis be laid for it short of Christ’s coming down to die atoningly before He rose and ascended to heaven. Hence we see the force of the well-known symbol of the Spirit in the oil that followed, first the water, and then the blood; as. is plain enough in Lev. 8, and also in Lev. 14. Thus Christ becomes the Head there; then only begins the body. As long as He is above, the body is here; and adding to it goes on by the Spirit given.

But the Lord is coming quickly not only to. receive us, but to judge the habitable earth; and all the convulsions that are and threaten around us point to this fact by the moral call for His intervention. God has revealed both beyond controversy in His word. Those that do not believe in His future are not to be depended on with regard to the past or the present. Him that does not believe in God’s word you will soon find as unreliable on

Genesis as on the rest of the Bible. But the Lord is coming quickly, and if we are profiting by Him in peace, other parts of revealed truth will by degrees fall into their proper places.

Are you members of that one body? Are you able through the grace of the Lord Jesus to say, “Abba Father,” when alone with God? If it be so, He has fitted you to dwell in the light of glory; surely also to have communion with the saints on earth as members of Christ’s body. Scripture shows us therein a clearly defined walk and worship. Never was such a unity, even while our Lord was here. It is a relationship founded on His death, resurrection, and ascension. Our Presbyterian friends like others confound the Head of the body with the King of saints” — itself a spurious reading and false idea. A King necessarily supposes a people governed by him and, however loyal, bound to keep their distance from him. But as members of the body united to its Head, you cannot insert the finest gossamer between; and this I fear is not really believed. It is a question of living faith in Christ and His word, whereby we understand the closeness of the tie, and live, as we are, a heavenly people, while still on earth. Let us first receive the truth as it is: then let it deal with our hearts and ways that we be not earthly-minded.

A body without a Head would be a monster; but Christ the Head gives by grace a suited character to His body, the church, and to each member in particular. Here we have the perfection, as of glory, so of grace, in meekness and humility; and God’s call is that this be made good in every member of it while here on earth. No believer doubts that the Head is in heaven; but are you a member.of His body? For His own glory God has formed

it, and the Spirit of God draws us out in obedient walk, as also in the expression of thanksgiving and praise; and this is worship.

Long before Israel is ready to sing the Psalms, God has these songs ready for them: they have not truly sung them yet; but they will do so in the days of the displayed kingdom, which will differ widely from this actual day. But the body must be completed first, and the Lord come. There are no Psalms written for us in the New Testament, but the church can sing her own “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs”; she is already in peace and happy; she has the Spirit to give requisite power. Everything is future for Israel. Meanwhile we come in, saved and blessed to the utmost, yet nothing but poor bankrupts in ourselves. For God has united us to Christ in heaven; and out of us flow rivers of living water, as it springs up in us unto life eternal: so the Lord promised in John 4 and 7.

Are you thus worshipping, and thus bearing witness to Christ on high? Do you know what it is now to share the Father’s joy? to be in communion with the Father and the Son? If sorrow of conscience likes to get alone with God, nothing so fills with divine joy as that fellowship which grace gives in Christ. To know that we are members of the body of Christ makes all the difference for our souls and our ways. Now is the time of this responsibility. Sovereign grace alone gave us to be of Him.

W.K.

The Church of God and the Ministry of Christ

With collateral points. In reply to the Rev. R. P. Carey’s “Remarks.”

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The Rector of St. Saviour’s renews the controversy opened by the Curate of St. John’s. I thank him for his general courtesy, and for the opportunity of confronting another line of argument with Scripture; but I enter on the task with not the less pain, because I believe every point raised by Mr. Carey can be satisfactorily decided against him. For experience teaches that party-spirit is strong, and that, where one fails to convince, some at least are sure to be alienated. He who cleaves to nothing but God’s Word and Spirit, stands on vantage-ground, from which he should not descend to questions of self; and a sorry advocate he must be, if he cannot disprove the title of a politico-religious institution adequately to represent the Church of God. Conscious, on the one hand, of no feeling inconsistent with esteem and love for adversaries on either side, I will not, on the other, compromise the truth by seeking to please men, nor withhold a warning voice, where, in my judgment, the devices of our great common enemy menace the unwary.

The Church Of God

The nature of its membership, with its discipline as a consequence, is the first and very grave question mooted. Here, strange to say, Mr. Dobrée agreed with me in the grand essential point, that union of the

saints,* separate from the world, is God's will; while I agree with Mr. Carey in the comparatively little point, that every well-conducted man, converted or not, may communicate in the Establishment, as far as its will is concerned. He tells us, that the Rubric enjoining communication "is a simple direction given by the Church to her members." This is certainly a mild way of reading it; but I must insist, that her members expressly comprise "every parishioner" (scandalous offenders excepted.) The recognition of the world as God's Church, with or without saints intermixed, is the groundwork of the Anglican body, and fatal to its claim of accordance with God's will, if Mr. Dobrée's principles and mine be true.

* Mr. Carey (pp. 7, 8) actually reasons from the undoubtedly lower sense in which the Jews are called "a holy people" in the Old Testament to "the saints in Christ Jesus" in the New testament! Does he not know that the Jew was only typically and carnally what the Christian is really and in the Spirit? To the Corinthian assembly, where appearances were as bad, if not worse than anywhere else, the Apostle writes, "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son." "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God! Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolators, etc. And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." If all this is attenuated to the unworthy idea that they were merely

“set apart from the heathen world and dedicated to God’s service in Holy Baptism” and that they were not saints personally, I need not say that here I discern a controversialist, but not “a sound exponent of Scripture.” The object is as much as possible to lower the Apostolic churches and to veil the real features of the Establishment, so as to make out as near a case of equal guilt, if not of equal beauty of holiness, as may quiet disturbed consciences. There seem traces of compunction, in pp. 5, 8 and elsewhere, as if the author shrank from the unlovely task, still, it was the sole hope of excusing his own system; and all the sad catalogue of the iniquities which the Spirit then discerned, denounced and called on the saints to hate and judge, is made, in clerical hands, to serve the end of a party. No statement of privileges, set down by man, even approaches the bright roll of blessing which the Apostles treat as the common possession of “all saints,” in the ordinary New Testament meaning of that term. How could any but those “believed to be saints,” in the fullest sense, be honestly addressed, as saved by grace, rejoicing in Christ, quickened and raised with Him, accepted in the Beloved, sealed of the Spirit, sons, kings and priests unto God? Could this, and very much more, he truthfully said of men who were merely separate from heathenism and baptized? Saintship is a real, living relationship with God by the Holy Ghost’s power, who reveals Christ to the soul, and is not a question either of a certain attainment or of a mere external dedication to God’s service. A clergyman’s difficulty is due chiefly to his own ecclesiastical atmosphere. If Mr. Carey would not predicate of “every parishioner” what St. Paul applies to all the saints in Ephesus or Rome, it is enough to show that the Apostle uses “saint,” in one sense,

while he understands it in another sense, which was common in Judaism, but is foreign to the Church.

But Mr. Carey questions the truth of these principles, and endeavours (in pp. 5-8) to prove, not that the Apostles received into Christian fellowship any decent man of the world, but that sins of uncleanness prevailed then, offences against unity and peace and order, and even false teachers and heretics. No doubt, the germs of these evils were there, in some cases the development too, on all sides danger and the need of urgent expostulation and warning. But the argument has no force for the purpose in view. For the evil ways, into which some or many professors of Christ fell after they were received, cannot prove that, these professors were not “believed to be saints” when first received. And, secondly, the instruction which the Holy Ghost furnishes for the judgment of these evils, far from helping mixed communion, is its emphatic refutation, and confirms in the strongest way the truth that none but “saints” are contemplated as fit and proper members of God’s Church, though, we all admit, deceivers and self-deceived may slip in.

Let us take that epistle which most of all displays moral, doctrinal, social, domestic and ecclesiastical disorder. (1 Corinthians.) Surely, the reader may bless God, that however sorrowful and humbling the picture may be as regards the saints, He has converted it, in His grace, into an occasion not only of correcting the then evils, desperate and various as they were, but of affording permanent and perfect canons for the guidance of the faithful at all times. Oh how sad, that well-meaning men should pervert His mercy into the error that those grievous evils were tolerated! (p. 9.) The precise

contrary is the truth: the Apostle enforces their judgment with all his authority in his first letter; and, in his second, he gives no obscure hint to any who remained impenitent, of that which the might expect when he came again. (2 Cor. 12:20, 21; 2 Cor. 13:2, 10.)

It is not enough borne in mind that the Corinthians were an infant church, highly endowed though they were with signal powers and gifts. They had been delivered by the knowledge of Christ from a corruption of morals which was a proverb even in the universally corrupt Pagan world. But these circumstances all conspired to leave them peculiarly exposed to the snares and temptations of the evil one, when St. Paul left them for other work. Divine wisdom and goodness, without excusing their sin, turned it in result to their good and ours; in no case tolerated evils great or small; but for the lesser forms furnished reproof and correction, and in the darkest shades made excommunication a matter of bounden duty-yea, on peril of becoming a leavened lump. The known guilt which was unjudged would attach to the whole body.

Mr. Carey will, I trust, pardon my thinking that his statements on the subject of discipline in pp. 9, 10, (and indeed wherever it occurs,) show undeniable want of familiarity with Scripture facts. Far from me be the thought that he suppressed evidence which he knew; but if he did not, what can the “Brethren” conclude? I say the “Brethren;” because he specially invites their attention to note the fact “that the evils then existing in the Church, many and grievous as they were, were tolerated and the offending members not cut off. To St. Paul and the other Apostles was confided the power of the keys. To them it belonged with the concurrence of

the assembly, and perhaps without it, (and perhaps to the assembly alone,) to deliver over unto Satan unworthy members of the body. How did they execute the power? They saw the grievous evils with which they were surrounded, and they loudly bewailed them. They warned offenders, they rebuked, they entreated them, but there it would seem they stopped — they did not proceed to excommunicate them. There are but two instances recorded in which recourse was had to this measure; one the case of the incestuous man, the other the case of Hymeneus and Alexander." I have given what I presume the author would desire to reach some eyes which may not glance over his tract; but I venture to say that there is perhaps not one among the "Brethren" who will not read or hear these words with astonishment. For they will see how inconsiderately a grave subject can be handled by an educated man, and what neglect of Scripture characterises most of those who seek to convert "Brethren" from the error of their ways.

The "Brethren" see as clear as light in God's Word, that what the mass of men desire to reduce the Church to, is the state of things which subsisted in Israel — a national body, which, in principle, embraced all the people who found their bond of religious union in the ordinances which attached to them as Abraham's seed after the flesh, with individual believers hidden among them. They see, just as clearly, that, according to the Scriptures, this state of things received its death-warrant in the death of Christ, whose resurrection was the dawn of a new day, in which comes to view Christianity properly so called, the Church of God. Hence, we read, from the day of Pentecost, "the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved." —

not “well-conducted men” merely, but saints in the New Testament sense of the word, i.e., persons separated to God from the world by the Holy Ghost, not Jews from Gentiles by the rite of circumcision. In fact, one of the salient features of the Church, which it was St. Paul’s line above all to bring out, was the union of the believing Jew and Gentile in one body: a thing impossible under the Old Testament, and in direct opposition to the law. But we are under grace, and not law, and are dead and risen with Christ, and hence enter, even while we are on earth, on wholly new ground, where God is now “gathering together in one His children that were scattered abroad.” Children of God there were before our Saviour died; but one of the revealed objects of His death was to gather them in one (John 11:52) to form the Church. Need I transfer to these pages the plain, reiterated, unvarying testimony of the Acts of the Apostles? The Holy Ghost’s character of the constituents of the Church, in Acts 4, ought to preclude mere argument. — “great grace was upon them all.” Yet, even then, in that one city of Jerusalem, there were no less than five thousand men, not to speak of women, who, in Scripture as in experience, are usually at least as numerous. If an Ananias and Sapphira conspired in a religious lie, was it not at once sternly judged as an insult not merely to the Church, but to the Divine Indweller who constituted them, who constitutes us, God’s habitation? If a Simon Magus, spite of his baptism, betrayed by his words his unregenerate heart, he is then and there denounced as having neither part nor lot in the matter, and still in the bond of iniquity. These facts do not look like tolerance of evil; nor had the Church in those days a door almost as wide as that of a market. On

the contrary, it was holy ground in the richest and deepest sense.

We might pursue that which “Brethren” read in this and other books of the New Testament. But St. Peter’s plea for the recognition of the Gentile converts may suffice to show that here, as with the Jews, not good human conduct but divine faith was looked for. “Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as He did unto us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I that I could withstand God? When they heard these things they held their peace and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.” Cornelius was a “well-conducted man,” nay, was one that “feared God with all his house,” before the visit of the great Jewish Apostle. But no servant of Christ, in those days, dreamt of a soul entering the Church unless on the ground of possessing the Holy Ghost. And this is the position of the “Brethren” now — by Mr. Carey’s confession, not that of the Establishment, which must needs be content with outward decency.

But then the gross corruptions in doctrine and practice which crept into some of the assemblies! Fully, sorrowfully, is it granted. Nevertheless there were with them, there are with us, these essential differences from the religion as by law established: 1st, none received as components of the assembly save those believed to have passed from death unto life, and indwelt of the Holy Ghost; and 2nd, holy discipline maintained by the Spirit in the assembly according to the Word of God. It is a fallacy of the first magnitude to think that, if an assembly consisted of none but real saints, grave disorders and sins might not arise through the craft of Satan; how much more, as we freely confess, we, like

those of old, must be content to receive those who on sufficient evidence, as it is judged, are believed to be such! On the other hand, to plead the record of the evils which appeared in the early Churches, as a licence for tolerating these evils then or now, will seem to "Brethren" equally weak in logic, lax in ethics, and unintelligent in Scripture.

Further, the record of the case is not at all given in its entirety; though I think the picture unwittingly overdrawn. Thus, there is no ground to believe that those of whom the Apostle speaks with tears to the Philippians, were then in their assembly or in any other. They had probably gone wholly outside the Church. It may prove terrible declension, but not the allowance of evil. Again, 2 Peter and Jude are decidedly prophetic of evil in its darkest dyes, though Apostles could then descry men who displayed evil enough to suggest the worst forebodings.

But the point most of all to be noted is, that if there were men found causing divisions and scandals, the saints are enjoined not to tolerate but avoid them. (Rom. 16) If others were forming cliques round their favourites, they are of course not to be put away, but yet they are reproved as carnal: (1 Cor. 3:) not, observe, as "natural men," which the mere "well-conducted" are, but as "carnal." If, through mixing the agape, or primitive love-feast, with the Lord's Supper, Satan had tempted some to cover this holy feast with the scandal of their own grossness, the Holy Ghost for ever separates the Eucharist from the accompaniment of an ordinary meal, and expounds its spiritual significance. But even so, the thing pressed is not, as with moderns, "worthy partakers," but the partaking worthily, which

every believer, and only the believer, can do, if he come in a spirit of self judgment. A more heinous blunder can hardly be than the threat of “damnation” in the Communion Service, borrowed from the unhappy translation of 1 Cor. 11:29, which may be natural in a scheme that invites “every parishioner” to “a means of grace,” but is refuted by its own context; for even in the worst case, where the Lord judges and chastens careless Christians, it is expressly that they should not be damned or condemned with the world. It is as sure as can be, then, that the very Corinthians, who had been cut off for their gross failure by the Lord’s judgments, were so dealt with that they should not be condemned with the world. That is, even they were saints in the real Christian sense, and not merely according to a shadowy, Jewish sanctity. Nay, more, the man who fell so horribly (1 Cor. 5) turned out, as we know from 2 Cor. 2, 7, to be much more than one dedicated in baptism; for if the first epistle commands the saints to put him out, the second calls for his public restoration, without a hint that he was first brought to God, though of course thoroughly broken down, in the interval. Mr. Carey’s inference from the evils at Corinth is, therefore, most peremptorily set aside by the epistles themselves. And so it is elsewhere. If a man preached “another Gospel,” Paul does not say, “you must listen, because he is your parish priest,” (for in truth both parishes and priests were novelties unheard of in professing Christendom for centuries after,) but “let him be accursed.” “He that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whose ever he be.” “I would they were even cut off that trouble you.” (Gal. 1, Gal. 5.) From every brother, walking disorderly, the saints are commanded to withdraw themselves — the very reverse of bearing with it. (2 Thess. 3) Granted that the early

Christians, like ourselves, might discern a heretic in their midst; but then, the rule is, not warning, rebuking, entreating and there stopping, but “after the first and second admonition reject.” (Titus, 3) Doubtless, every case of discipline does not call for rejection: but the necessary principle of God’s Church, as a true witness on earth of Christ in heaven, is intolerance of evil in the power of the Spirit, instead of the pitiable imbecility which some commend and try, in vain, to justify. “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear,” (1 Tim. 5) is well known and acted on where Scripture rules, but cannot be in the Anglican body; which undeniably consists for the most part of men, (and not always “well-conducted men,”) having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof: “from such,” mark it well, the man of God, instructed in the perils of the last days, is charged to “TURN AWAY.” (2 Tim. 3)

Moreover, the Holy Ghost does give us, in 1 Cor. 5, not merely one instance, nor ten thousand instances, of excommunication, but what is far better — the positive obligation laid on the assembly of God to exercise discipline, and to the last degree, if needed; the ground on which it is based; the object in view; and the sort of sins which demands rigour. And it is of the utmost moment to observe that, though the Apostle, in urging their responsibility, puts himself with them in spirit, yet would it not have been in any wise the same thing, had even he been present in body and done it all for them. The assembly must judge those within; they must have conscience and heart exercised for it was not a question of a mere court of law, dealing coldly with somebody’s affairs, but a most afflicting thing that they, the saints of God, should have in their midst a deep dishonour done

to their Lord. If it were only their families, how would they not grieve; how much more for such a scandal in God's family! Hence they were called on to put away from among themselves the wicked person - to approve themselves clear in the matter. The action of a mere clerk would not suffice; for that would be on the principle of a kind of religious police. What God looks for in His assembly — what was effected even in the poor despised Corinthian saints, was sorrow after a godly sort: "What carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves; yea, what indignation; yea, what fear; yea, what vehement desire; yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." And all this wrought in the body of the saints, chiefly through or in reference to one case of distressing discipline, as is plain from 2 Cor. 7:12! The principle assumes that the Church is a holy company; ("ye are unleavened;") and on this basis practical purity is insisted on ("that ye may be a new lump.") For the foundation of the Church being God's most holy judgment and blotting out of sin in Christ's cross, who suffered as the true Paschal Lamb, we are called, as saints of God, individually and corporately, always and everywhere, to keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth; and this, not in personal godliness only, but in refusing communion with any one called a brother who is of unclean life, covetous, or a railer, etc. What would become of a clergyman who would dare to cut off a covetous person or a railer! Assuredly the issue would be, not the excommunication of these offenders, common as they are, but the censure, at the least, of the innovating ecclesiastic. Scripture, therefore, is not the directory of their discipline. Besides, it is the Church, and not a minister only, that

the Holy Ghost calls on to act; and this never was nor can be in Anglicanism. Thus, a minister's rights, or a society's rules, are not in question, but the assembly of God doing His will.

Indeed, the Lord had Himself shown, in Matt. 18, another principle which never seems to cross the minds of those who would lower and fritter away to their own level the holy order of the Church. For case which began in a trespass against a brother might elicit such heady self-will, that when all loving overtures closed in the offender's refusal to "hear the church," he is to be treated "as an heathen man and a publican." It is most striking also to note that the gracious Lord, providing, it would seem, for all contingencies in the break-up of the Church's external unity, was pleased to promise heavenly ratification to the discipline of but "two or three," if gathered in the true power of His name. What an encouragement to faith, were we ever so few and feeble! What disallowance of all evil! Will any clergyman venture to say that this is the mode or measure of Anglican discipline? "Tell it to the church!" "Hear the church!" Such directions are inapplicable and practically unheard of there; but they are the living words of Christ, where Scripture is the sole standard. Others may tell the Curate; they may hear the Curate; but, alas! there is with them no church either to tell or to hear.*

* I have read many erroneous notions on the Church and its discipline; but I remember few more painful than Mr. Carey's central paragraph in page 13: "Whether it be permitted to the Church at any time to enforce a sterner discipline that St. Paul thought fit himself to enforce, - whether it would be advisable," etc, The words are quiet

and calm and amiable; the sentiment is, in my opinion, pernicious and irreverent, as well as contrary to fact. We have just seen how comprehensive and holy the discipline was that “St. Paul thought fit himself to enforce,” which some would reduce to more isolated points, so as to cover the unfaithfulness of themselves and their system. What is most of all to be reprobated is the light way in which it is even made a question, whether the Church should adopt another discipline. But this guilty bearing toward Scripture is the natural result of the presumption which dares to make a Church after man’s own pleasure, and to form Services or Articles for a past day or the present. What trifling with the revelation of God! And what a degradation for the Church, whose real dignity lies in lowly, unqualified subjection to the Lord, above “these times of free inquiry,” no less than those of blind medieval superstition!

It is a question, primarily, of what the Church of God is, and secondarily, of Scriptural discipline. I am at a loss to understand how a believing man can read the epistles attentively without the conviction that the character of the assemblies there described differs not only in degree, but in kind, from the promiscuous congregations of nationalism. Take Col. 1 as a sample; and what can be clearer than that the holiness of the Christian body is of another sort altogether from that of Israel as a people? Did Jews give, thanks to the Father who had made them meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light? Could Jews say that He had delivered them from the power of darkness and had translated them into the kingdom of the Son of His love? Had they individually redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins? I

take this, without any particular choice, to show the sense Scripture attaches to “the saints” of the New Testament. Mr. Carey is quite mistaken, not only in his own retrogression to the Old Testament measure in Israel, but in fancying that I contend for “the mere ground” (!) that they (Christians) “have not reached a particular standard of personal holiness.” Far from it — I hold what the New Testament teaches, that every true believer, conformist or not, is a saint of God; that he has eternal life and the Holy Ghost dwelling in him; and this through faith, before the question of his walk begins, and, therefore, before reaching a particular standard of personal holiness. The difference which separates my views from Mr. Carey’s is deeper than a question of Church or discipline; we differ radically as to “what is a Christian?” There, Mr. Dobrée agrees with me; but it is passing strange that, agreeing with me in principle, he is united with Mr. Carey in practice.

It is utterly inconsistent with Scripture and fact, then, to describe the Anglican body as “a Church that follows the Apostles’ guidance, that does what the Apostles did and abstains from doing what they abstained from.” (p. 11.) For I have shown at considerable length, that it never was a church at all, if the Church of God means, as Scripture everywhere teaches, the assembly of such as were believed to be sanctified in Christ Jesus, subject to the Word and Spirit of God, and in known manifest separation from the world. No doubt, if Anglicanism were the Church of God in this country, it would be, “on my principles,” a sin to separate; but so it would be yet more a sin to have separated from Romanism, which beyond a doubt had possession of the land before Henry VIII, if Romanism had been a church of God. But while I

allow both systems to be parts of the wheat-and-tare-field of Christendom, it is evident that the Word of God, which is infinitely more important than Mr. Carey's principles or mine, convicts the English and Romish bodies of palpable, habitual, systematic departure from all the special features of the Church. It is no difficulty for me to give Scriptural reasons for disowning either one or other; but it is hard to see how a Protestant, who admits Rome to be a real church of God, can justify secession from it three hundred years ago, or at this moment; for no lapse of time can consecrate an error or a sin. So long as a body is recognised as a church of God at all, it is a sin to abandon it: but when you have the certainty from God's Word, that a body either never possessed that title or has forfeited it by such a departure in principle and practice as forbids all return, the way is clear; it is no sin, but a duty, to be separate.

It is instructive to observe that, when comparing Romanism with "the true Church of Christ," the Homilies abandon their own system and fall back on a very tolerable anticipation of the ground taken by the "Brethren." "The true Church is an universal congregation or fellowship of Gods faithful and elect people," ["the saints, or those believed to be such," is a rather more guarded statement,] built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets. [not on the Jewish system of a holy people under the law,] Jesus Christ Himself being the head corner-stone [not a word about the Sovereign's supremacy in ecclesiastical estates, any more than the Pope's]. And it hath always three notes or marks, whereby it is known: pure and sound doctrine, the sacraments ministered according to Christ's holy institution, and the right use of

ecclesiastical discipline." (Homily for Whitsunday, second part.)* Let the Anglican Christian weigh these words. They do not mean that singular invention of Augustine's, a Church invisible, but what I, with Scripture, call "the assembly," and what my critic calls "the visible Church." for they speak of that universal congregation which has the notes of sound doctrine, due ministration of the sacraments, and right discipline, all of which things belong to the Church as a known body on earth, not in heaven or invisible. Reference to Art. 19 puts the matter beyond doubt. But if this must be conceded, it is evident that, when testing Rome by the Scriptures, the force of truth led the Homilist from his own position to ours. Let Mr. Carey consider it; for, in truth, his argument is against the Acts and Epistles, and even the Homily, when defining the true Church, quite as much as against my view. (pp. 13, 14.) How strange to command or invite "every parishioner" to communicate; and then, after warning publicly and privately too, to call the act of coming to the Lord's table, on the part of any decent worldly man, a public profession of his faith in Christ! How miserably short of the faith of God's elect and faithful people! It is the faith of a creed, not of God's operation; and the result is the Church of England, in marked contrast with the Church of God.

* For my part, I cannot but think that the Homily on the Holy Ghost (written probably by Jewell) contains not a little that is "godly and wholesome, and necessary for these times," and that it would not he amiss if read "diligently and distinctly, that it might be understanded of the people." Probably, however, the Christians who ponder and pray might be startled, after being taught by the Homily that the right use of ecclesiastical discipline

is a mark of the true church, to hear in Lent the painful admission, that, (until the restoration of the old godly discipline which is much to be wished, but as yet in vain,) they are obliged to content themselves with reading the curses of Deut. 27, and other places of Scripture.

Reconciliation

Mr. Carey thinks “it is satisfactory to observe, that with all the desire to bring forward whatever he considers condemnatory of the Church [i.e., the English Establishment], Mr. Kelly can only attack six articles out of the thirty-nine.” Now he ought to have known, without a word of further explanation, that, on my principles, there are at least four more articles (8, 20, 21, 24) to which I must take exception, no less than to the six explicitly named. For he is well aware that I object to the imposition of a humanly framed symbol of faith, and this for reasons which may appear by and by, though with the greatest respect for the so-called Athanasian creed, as a doctrinal statement. And that which is laid down as to the authority of the Church, general councils, and traditions, he could still less expect me to receive. This may satisfy him that he mistook both the fact and my spirit in the “desire” he imputed so hastily.

Besides, were it true that six articles only were considered to be unscriptural, because these alone were specified, what can be thought of the moral condition which treats even the smaller number as involving anything “satisfactory?” Thousands of Christians in our country, to speak of no other, whose orthodoxy and godliness no unprejudiced judge doubts, share my

convictions fully. The solidity of their grounds of objection is not the question now. The fact is past doubt that very many Christians who would be welcome as members or ministers in the best of existing religious bodies, could not righteously abide in the national system, if it were only for this, that such membership in all honesty implies the uniform profession of all the articles, to the disallowance of the least difference. I should have thought one faulty article the reverse of "satisfactory." Had it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and the Apostles to lay down ninety-nine articles, absolute submission to which, express or implied, was bound on the conscience of every person who entered the Church, God forbid that any of us should raise the shade of a difficulty. But it is obvious to the reader of the New Testament, that the Apostles, etc., simply required from converts, repentance toward God and faith in Christ. Where there was living faith, the assembly of God became the scene of growth and knowledge; where there was not, such error or evil, sooner or later, manifested itself that in extreme cases excision or apostacy ensued. I leave the reader to judge, if this account of the Apostolic Church be true, how far the imposition of 39 Articles resembles the earliest and only authoritative practice. Is it not clear and certain, that if the Church was intended to comprehend all the faithful within its bosom, this divine object would be necessarily defeated by binding, as formularies of faith on all its members, statements which many of the faithful reject! To do so is to become a sect; it is not the Church; for every intelligent Christian will admit that a sect, as contrasted with God's assembly, is a society which upsets the scriptural terms of communion, by an unwarranted widening or narrowing of the basis which

God sanctions. Were one expected to receive a single statement, which he believed, on scriptural grounds, to be erroneous, it would and ought to hinder a true man from joining those that exacted it. The sectarian character of the Establishment in this respect is as evident, as the defence set up is weak morally and in reasoning.

The next paragraph, (and indeed the rest of the section, pp. 15-20,) may well surprise, because of the inattention or insubmission to Scripture it discloses. As the point is of real doctrinal moment, I will state it as clearly and in as few words as possible. The objection was raised by me to Art. 2, that it represents our Lord as suffering and dying, in order to reconcile His Father to us: whereas the truth is, that God was in Christ reconciling (not Himself to the world, but) the world to Himself. Now Mr. Carey does not deny that I have given fairly the sense both of 2 Cor. 5 on the one hand, and of the Article on the other. I had also confirmed my opposition to the Anglican doctrine by a reference to Rom. 5 and Col. 1; and he does not question the sense I have given to these texts, as indeed he could not legitimately. And yet, in the face of three plain Scriptures, he seems to marvel:- "This is positively all he says. Not one word is added in proof." Now I should have judged that a Christian man, who trembled at the Word of God, would have thought that the fullest and most decisive proof lay in such unquestioned passages of Holy Writ, which expressly stated a view of reconciliation that differs from, and is the exact converse of, the Article. Mr. Carey thinks I ought to have maintained "so grave an accusation by cogent and convincing argument." Will he permit me to tell him plainly, that I know of no argument so cogent

and convincing as a plain, direct Scripture, the meaning of which is accepted by both sides? He whose cause requires him to escape from the force of these Scriptures, may have recourse to “argument;” (whether “cogent and convincing,” will soon appear;) but I am entitled to stand, without other support, on texts which teach a totally different doctrine from that of the Article, until other texts are produced which seem to contain the incriminated doctrine. Mr. Carey has done nothing of the kind, and what is more, he cannot. Let him cite one passage of Scripture which asserts the same thing as Article 2, nay, which resembles it, or could be conceived to be its source, and I will allow him the highest “credit as a controversialist and as a sound exponent of Scripture.” He says, “I will not controvert the sense Mr. Kelly puts upon the passages he cites” (p. 16): why, then, does he not cite other passages, if such there be, which favour the doctrine of the Article?

Instead of this, he first of all betakes himself to an argument which is anything but cogent and convincing. “Reconciliation necessarily implies two parties” (p. 15:) nobody disputes it; but the question is, If man became the enemy of God, was God the enemy of man? This is precisely what I deny, and what the erroneous doctrine insinuates. In human things, even, it is not always true that where a breach exists, both are at enmity, or at variance as it is here put. In our case, it is the mere unbelief of man who, being himself an enemy to God, infers to his ruin that God is his enemy. If the word of God taught that He entertained the hostile feelings toward man which man undoubtedly has toward God, Article 2 might be argued out, and my assertion would seem unfounded and false. But as no such counter-proof

appears, and such enmity is allowed to be hardly possible, (p. 18,) the Article remains under the unrefuted and irrefutable charge of false doctrine. “The passages,” he says, “treat of reconciliation under one aspect, with reference to man. The Article treats of reconciliation under the other aspect, with reference to God.” (p. 16.) Exactly so. but inasmuch as the Bible never treats of reconciliation with reference to God but only to man, I am greatly deceived if the Article is not thereby convicted of an unscriptural character. Scripture speaks of reconciling us to God, the Article speaks of reconciling the Father to us. They are absolutely distinct statements; and sound reasoning will never confound them. Imagination may cry, “Can they not be, are they not both true?” but faith says in reply, Where is your Scripture for reconciling the Father to us? How does the Article, enquires Mr. Carey, militate against the words of the Apostle? Doubly, I answer; because treating of reconciliation, it wholly omits what Scripture does say, and it only affirms what Scripture never says. The Article is not — indeed, it is not — the Apostle. There is some difference, after all, in the weight of their authority. The Article gives us the opinion of an English Bishop or Archbishop in the name of the Crown; the Apostle gives us perfect truth in the name of God. The clergy (unfortunately, as I humbly think,) subscribe the former; the “Brethren” unhesitatingly prefer the latter. Were there no Article 2, there is no reason to doubt that Scripture would suffice for the believer, and be all the better too, without the incubus of guesses at truth.

“Besides, is not our reconciliation to the Father implied in His reconciliation to us.” (p. 16.) Now, I can

understand reasoning from an admitted, indisputable truth in the Bible, and deducing consequences which may be considered fairly derivable, if not necessarily flowing, from it. But here the process is reversed, and the plea is set up, that an undoubted truth, expressed over and over in Scripture, is implied in the unproved statement of the Article. Assuredly this view of a "cogent" argument differs widely from mine; for I am satisfied that the framers of the formulary meant what they said, and that they fell into the same blunder which occurs in the works of old and modern divines; and this, because the tendency to darken the grace of God is natural to the heart, whereas the truth, being supernatural, demands very simple faith for receiving it. Of course, to find oneself bound solemnly to an error is painful; and in some cases, at least, God may use the circumstance to awaken consciences to examine, not only this Article, but the entire system, in the light of His Word only. And unfeignedly shall I rejoice, if my reply to the attacks of Low Church or High Church is blessed to that end. Meanwhile, who can wonder, that one who is thoroughly attached to the Anglican body, should do his best to soften down, and explain, and reconcile statements which, if believed to be untrue, must damage the character of formularies so important! But I ask any upright, unprejudiced person, whether it is a reasonable demand that a Christian should give in his adhesion to the notion that Christ suffered and died to reconcile His Father to us, when the doctrine revealed on this head is that God has reconciled us to Himself by the death of His Son?

Had the Article taught that Christ died that we might be reconciled to God; or were it said that He suffered to

atone for us, i.e., to expiate our sins, either statement would be sound and scriptural. But, as it stands, it turns things upside down, and displays error and carelessness, to say the least. The object of an Article is to furnish a precise formula, avoiding all ambiguity; and the question is, whether it tells the truth of God, not what it may imply through the lips of an advocate. No frequency of repeating the phrase, “reconciling the Father to us,” will stamp it with the superscription of the Great King. I thank God that the second Article is as far as possible from Socinian error, and that those who framed it were, doubtless, as opposed as the “Brethren” are to that destructive form of Antichrist, which basely abuses divine love to the denial of divine holiness. Still, it has been evident to me for some years, that the statements of many men, orthodox in the main, and notably of Art. 2, do very unintentionally expose the truth to assaults from those misguided enemies of the Lord, who derive their only semblance of strength from a mixture of error with truth on the part of His friends. This always weakens a cause, let it be ever so good in a general way; and justly so, in the righteous government of God, who has magnified His Word above all His name and claims for it, from His children, an absolute and hearty submission.

Mr. Carey thinks, mistakenly enough, that I confound the Father’s love and His reconciliation with man. How often must one repeat that the Bible knows nothing of the Father’s reconciliation with man? Till they can show Scripture for it, I take the liberty of treating it as a myth of the theologians. But it is quite certain, as will appear presently, that reconciliation has been confounded with propitiation or atonement. What I affirm is, that God’s

love, which sought to reconcile men, was not caused by the Saviour's death, as the Article to me implies, but rather manifested itself in sending His Son and triumphed over man's enmity in the cross, which became, by grace, an unfailing basis for slaying the enmity and reconciling His enemies to Himself. If 2 Cor. 5:18-21 be weighed, it will be seen not only that God has reconciled His saints to Himself by Jesus Christ, but that He was in Christ when personally in the world, meeting sinners, not in the severity and distance of law, but with full and free reconciling love, not imputing trespasses but forgiving; for as He said Himself, "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." But they refused all and rejected Him; and by Him, made sin on the cross, atonement has been wrought eternal redemption. Evidently then God's reconciling love, though only complete and effectual in the cross, displayed itself in Christ before His death, which is not the impression that one could gather from Article 2, even by implication, if I may be allowed to form an opinion.

But Mr. Carey grows bolder in p. 17, and ventures to ask if it is not strictly true that Christ died to reconcile His Father to us! And what is the alleged proof from Scripture? 1 John, 2:2, and Rom. 3:25; that is, passages which do not so much as allude to reconciliation, but express the wholly distinct, though of course connected, truth of propitiation. "Rendering the Father propitious unto us," is not the true meaning, but expiating our sins for God sent and set forth His Son to be, in the one case: an expiatory victim or sacrifice, and in the other, a propitiatory, or mercy-seat, by faith in His blood. "It may be difficult," Mr. Carey justly remarks, "and no doubt it

is infinitely difficult, to explain." But the more incapable we are of measuring the unfathomable depths of the cross, the less it becomes us to teach for doctrines the conjectures or the illative reasonings of men. A singular proof of the danger of slipping on the topic before us may be seen in comparing Rom. 5:11 with Heb. 2:17, as given in our own admirable Authorised Version. No competent scholar would now deny that the translation of both texts is faulty; for in Rom. 5 the true sense is "reconciliation" (as the margin supplies) and not "atonement," which last is the proper rendering in Heb. 2, and not "reconciliation." It is superfluous, perhaps, to add, that I would rather confirm than enfeeble by one word the solemn truth of God's wrath and judgment of sin, and the inevitable, endless doom of all that despise the Saviour. Entirely do I agree that there was a barrier in man's way to God, and a barrier insuperable save to Him who appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. But such is the force of the truth which I am seeking to clear from the shade, which, in my judgment, Article 2 casts over it, that even our ardent defender of that Article "can hardly conceive it possible, that this bar consisted in any feeling of enmity in the Divine mind towards man" (p. 18). Now, the distinction between "reconciliation" and "atonement," which is plain and positive in Scripture, but lost because confounded in Article 2, accounts for and harmonizes that which otherwise seems at variance. For if God simply displayed His infinite love in reconciling His enemies to Himself, where were His holy hatred and abhorrence of their sins? And if He only poured out His wrath in the judgment of their iniquity, where were His love? In Christ, and above all in His cross, all is fully and for ever established to God's glory. "Mercy and truth are met

together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." We are reconciled to God; and God rests in the everlasting efficacy for us of His atoning sacrifice, who sums up the scope of all the offerings — yea, infinitely more — in His one offering.

From this precious theme, however, I must turn to notice passingly the argument (pp. 18, 19) founded on the term "reconciling" in Rom. 11:15. Nobody contends that it means "the renouncing on the world's part of previous enmity to God;" but Mr. Carey goes much too far in his alternative that it plainly means "God's being reconciled to the world." There is not such an idea in the Bible as "God's being reconciled to the world." The Church, or the saints, are said to be reconciled to God, never the world. This is the first mistake. Next, God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. This was His aspect or attitude to the world in His incarnate Son. But it is nowhere the intimation of Scripture - that the world is reconciled to God; and still less do we hear of "God's being reconciled to the world." It is evident that it is the unfortunate doctrine of Article 2 which hangs like a millstone round the neck, and seems to render the right understanding and expression of reconciliation impossible to one who is under its influence. The true meaning of the phrase in Romans 11 I take to be, that God is now turning the fall of Israel to the blessing of the Gentiles, and instead of winking at the times of heathen ignorance, He is now dealing with the world by the word of reconciliation. He is sending the gospel of His grace to all, and commanding all men everywhere to repent.

Now it seems to me that the pith of what I have just enlarged on was expressed in plain terms in the little

sentence of which Mr. Carey speaks with such unusual asperity — “written in so dogmatic a tone that it would appear to be, in Mr. Kelly’s mind, conclusive.” (p. 19.) And yet reading it over and over again, with all the judicial sternness one is bound to muster against the accused, I am really unable to pronounce it guilty, either on the count of dogmatism in page 19, or of obscurity in page 20. Let the reader judge; for here it is: “God needed the atoning sacrifice, we (not He) needed reconciliation.” If the sentence had been understood, the dogmatic tone might have disappeared in the solution of the enigma. Surprise is more my feeling than any other — a surprise increased by the temerity of interpolating my text by a gratuitous parenthesis, which falsifies the first clause. If he did not understand my words, and of course, therefore, could not reply, it was singular, under such circumstances, that the sentence was not left as I wrote it, without an addition from Mr. Carey — God (not we), etc. — which mars the sense and suggests a ridiculous and fatal error. Let neither the author nor his friends misunderstand me. The fact is as I have stated it; but I do not believe that there was any wrong meant, or that the inability to understand was affected. The whole misapprehension sprang from his really not comprehending what is to my mind as clear as it is brief. By God’s needing the atonement, was meant the necessity that His majesty and moral nature should be vindicated by the full punishment of sin in the cross of Christ, the aspect of expiation for our sins, being Godward; just as, in the Jewish type answering to it, the blood was put upon and before the mercy-seat, presented to God, not to the people, though most surely on their behalf. So, in the Passover, God says, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” Hence, I consider,

that in Rom. 5 “we have received the atonement,” (instead of reconciliation, as it should be,) is prejudicial to the truth, and might play a dangerous part in the hands of a God-dishonouring, sin-slighting Socinian, who teaches that the propitiation of Christ was towards man, not God, and that He was only the victim of man’s wickedness, instead of being also, and in atonement exclusively, the Lamb of God. On the other hand, I hold it to be incalculably important to press, that the love being God’s, who was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, it is not God but we, who, in Scripture, are described as receiving “the reconciliation.” The sinner wants reconciliation for himself - not for his sins, which last, being a mistranslation of Heb. 2, I hope I am not presumptuous in stigmatizing as an absurdity, no matter what the number or the weight of human authorities which may have endorsed it.

But it will be satisfactory, instead of arguing, to see the entire testimony of Scripture on the question of reconciliation; lest the thought might rest on any soul that one view of reconciliation need not exclude another. It will be apparent, however, that no part of God’s Word gives the remotest hint that Christ died to reconcile His Father to us. Many passages treat of the subject, and all of them speak of our reconciliation to God, not one of God’s being reconciled to us. The passages are these:*

*Though I doubted about saying a word on the note to page 19, yet as the omission might encourage a thoughtless mind to impute to me the evasion of any portion of the counter-evidence, I must notice it. — The first thing, which it requires no great learning to see, is the very uncritical manner in which διαλλάσσω is impressed into the service of καταλλάσσω, contrary to

the standing rule that, in all exact writing, (and I claim exactness in the most absolute way for the choice of terms in Scripture,) every difference of word implies a difference of meaning. I am aware the Rector of St. Saviour's may excuse himself that he is only in this following the learned Bishop Pearson. The canon I have laid down, however is too firmly established in the minds of accurate scholars generally, to be set aside even by his name. Indeed, the use of διά in composition for the sense of one with another is notorious, and of course recognised by all lexicographers of value. A few examples must suffice. Καταγγέλλω means to announce;

διαγγ. to inform one another;

καταγιγνώσκω to judge against a person;

διαγιγ. to distinguish;

καταδέχ. to receive back;

διαδέχ. to receive one from another;

κατᾳδω to sing to a person;

δ. to contend in singing;

καταλέγ. to recount,

διαλέγ. to converse. The confusion of these forms is, perhaps, a relic of the old Dutch school (ἐν=εἰς, ἐκ=ἀπό, κ. τ. λ.), which never deserved the acceptance of a reflecting person. Thus, if we take Matt. 5:24, and compare it with 1 Cor. 7:11, it is clear that διαλλάγηθι has a delicate propriety in the former, and καταλλαγήτω in the latter. For δ. admits of a mutuality in the reconciliation, which it is not the object of κ. to imply. Hence κ. would have failed to convey what our Lord intended in Matt. 5; for the object here was not only to

rectify my own part, but to meet what the brother had against me. It is not so in 1 Cor. 7, where the wife has done wrong, and it is a question of her getting back in peace to her husband who may have had no feeling but of love towards her throughout her separation. The same principle applies to the quotation from the Septuagint version of 1 Sam. 29:4. This, if the criticism be well-founded (and I do not fear, if it be sifted by competent and candid scholars), turns the argument into the opposite direction and utterly routs that baseless phrase — reconciling the Father to us and us to the Father — which occurs in the Bishop of London's last Charge as well as in Mr. Carey's "Remarks." Had δ. been used in the matter of our reconciliation to God, there would have been reason; as it is, there is not only none for it, but the choice of the word κ. rather than δ. is against the notion, as well as the context in every instance. Besides, whoever may do it, there is no more glaring sign of weakness than neglecting the body of positive evidence, which runs one way, and trying to extract something different to set all this aside, by the help of texts which allude to an offended brother or an offending wife. In the case before us, I believe that a more thorough acquaintance with Greek would have shown that the comparison of κ. with δ. strengthens my view against Mr. Carey's. Further, the fallacy of the reasoning on such texts against direct doctrinal statements is the same as that which argues on the Sonship of the Lord Jesus to deny His co-eternity with the Father.

"For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God [not God to us] by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled [not he but] we shall be saved by his

life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom [not God but] we have now received the reconciliation." (Rom. 5:10, 11.)

"For if the casting away of them [the Jews] be the reconciling [not of God, but] of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?" Rom. 11:15.

"And all things are of God who hath reconciled us to himself [not himself to us] by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation: to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself [not himself to the world], not imputing their trespasses unto them - and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God [not God to you]." 2 Cor. 5:18-20.

The word occurs also in a form somewhat modified by another preposition which enters into its composition; but this, too, confirms the case.

"And that he might reconcile both unto God [not God to both]." Eph. 2:16.

"And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself [not himself to all things].... And you... hath he reconciled [not, him have ye reconciled]." Col. 1:20, 21.

The reader has now before him a complete view of every Scripture which bears on this important side of Gospel truth. After such an induction, Mr. Carey may perhaps feel that, knowing the case before he wrote with as much certainty as now, on a ground which is

incomparably stronger than any argument can be, I might be allowed to speak with decision and brevity. I greatly deceive myself if unbiassed Christians, be they where they may, who weigh in the sanctuary the evidence here given, will not agree with me that the Word of God is clear, full and overwhelming against the doctrine of Article 2 on reconciliation.

The Ministry Of Christ

Mr. Carey considers my language, in repudiating Article 23, “unmeasured.” But it is going too far to insinuate that adequate Scripture was not given. There was no citation of texts, it is true, and only two chapters were formally named; but those who know the Bible will hardly deny that a larger amount of direct Scriptural evidence was compressed into one sentence (Matt. 9:38; Matt. 25:14 and seq,; Mark, 3:14; Luke, 10:1, 2; Eph. 4:7-16; 1 Cor. 12: and 1 Peter, 4:10), than he has spread, by the help of argument, over seven or eight pages of the “Remarks.” 1 Cor. 14 was appealed to solely as proving the free exercise of spiritual gift within the assembly: as to free preaching without, other passages clearly demonstrate it, and none but the most ignorant would dispute it. “But I rather wonder,” continues the writer, “that reference is made to the chapter at all, for it is nothing but a rebuke to the Corinthians for using their spiritual gifts in a disorderly way - and one verse [37] seems to imply that some believed themselves prophets and spiritual who were not so.” (p. 21.) It is my turn now to impeach my critic’s language as “unmeasured;” but there is this grave difference that, while my statement seemed to him unguarded, in speaking of a human document which I believe to be

erroneous and sinful, I maintain Mr. Carey's statement, in speaking of God's Word, to be not only unmeasured, but contrary to fact. For 1 Cor. 14 rebukes abuse, as does almost every other chapter; and if it would be a libel to pronounce the whole epistle "nothing but a rebuke," so it is in the particular case before us. In truth, this chapter is the richest vein of instruction which the Word of God contains on ministering in the congregation. It is not surprising that Mr. Carey does not see it; for the Article, professedly treating of the same subject, passes all by in dead silence; and it would seem presumptuous for a dutiful son to allow for a moment that God's Word contains one line of regulation, and that the fathers of Anglicanism maintain another not only different but opposed and irreconcileable. And yet so decisive is the testimony to the original practice, that even Mr. Carey cannot but "readily admit that the Corinthians had spiritual gifts," and that they exercised them "within the assembly," though all confess that the way was such as to incur reproof.

The true question, evidently, is not whether the Corinthians were reprimanded, but what the order is on which the Holy Ghost insists. And I am bold to affirm, that disorderly as those saints may have been, and childish as their vanity was in setting such store on showy gifts, like speaking in a tongue, etc., their faults, bad and inexcusable as they might be, were a trifle compared with the deliberate dishonour, now alas! habitually done to God, in wholly ignoring His system of the assembly with the Holy Ghost present and operating according to His will by the various members of Christ's body. The Corinthians, through an unspiritual abuse of their newly tasted liberty, exposed the Lord's name to

grievous reproach, and - were in danger of bringing the powers of the Holy Ghost into contempt. Never was there a more fitting occasion to assert the clerical or, as some style it, the one-man principle, if it were of God. The very contrary is done by the Apostle. He blames their love of display, their anxiety each to do something, their disparagement of the most precious gifts for those of louder appeal to the senses. He lays down the true principle as to speaking and thanksgiving. He regulates when and how tongues might be spoken, and when not; he gives equally definite guidance for the ministry of the prophets: all being under the comprehensive rules of common edification, and of comely order. But so far from closing the door on the right of the Holy Ghost to use any brother, if it pleased the Lord to open his mouth, he distinctly lets the Corinthians know that they could all prophesy one by one, that all might learn and all might be comforted. And he who has never experienced the privilege may be assured by those who have, that it is a good and wholesome thing for any man, let him be ever so gifted of God, sometimes to be a learner in the midst of his brethren; and that the trial of grace and patience, to which upright walking in this divine path must call the believer, is abundantly owned of God and blessed on all sides. Further, I may add that St. Paul does not question the reality of the gifts at Corinth, as Mr. Carey seems to imagine. The evil lay not in the unfounded pretension of the ungifted, or ἰδιῶται, but in the fleshly display of the gifted. The only class forbidden to speak in the assemblies are “women” — the strongest possible proof that there was no barrier in the way of the men, always remembering that the question is not power of the Spirit to minister, but title if there be power. And I confess it is wonderful to my mind that a clergyman who

hardly acts on a single direction of this chapter (save silencing women), nor even thinks of it, because he is in a system where it is all absolutely excluded, should quote, above all others, that verse which rebukes his own body with infinitely greater severity than it touches any individual at Corinth. For the real bearing of 1 Cor. 14:37 is an appeal to those who claimed a high place there, that as surely as their claim was just, they would recognise what Paul wrote to be the commandments of the Lord. The Word of God has come out from Anglicans at least as little as from the Corinthian prophets; it comes to the Christian, wherever and whenever he may be. The question for our consciences is, how far we are acting it out in our church relations, and in an individual way. To treat 1 Cor. 14 as “nothing but a rebuke” to the Corinthians and practically as obsolete to Christians now as the rites of our Druid ancestors, would be a strange proof that a man is “spiritual,” and that his exposition is sound. Liberty of ministry, regulated by God’s Word through the Apostle, is the undoubted standing order for God’s assembly — not, I freely allow, for the Anglican body. How can Christian men quote the last verse of 1 Cor. 14 and cast to the winds the obligation of bowing to the rest? Or will it be maintained, either, that we have no spiritual gifts for ministry yet remaining; or, if we have, that their exercise is not to be regulated by the Word that comes from God, but by the Canons and Articles which emanate from themselves? This were Corinthian, that incredulity.

Before entering on details, let me say that apostolic or quasi-apostolic appointment to the charge of elders in an assembly is fully allowed. The practical question that remains is, How, or whether, Scripture guarantees the

continuance of this appointing power? There is, above all, the far larger question, which Mr. Carey has not even attempted to face: — Does not Scripture demonstrate, that beside the local charges which required a competent power of appointment, the Holy Ghost maintained, both without and within the assembly, the fullest right to work as He saw fit by the various members of Christ's body? If ever there was a time when the Church, generally, was in order, it was in the Apostolic days; if ever there was, in those days, a special case of disorder, it was among the Corinthians; and yet, in those days of order and in dealing with that very disorder, the principle of the free action of the Holy Ghost is not withdrawn but insisted on in 1 Cor. 12). and this principle, and no other, strengthened and regulated by the exquisite episode on love in 1 Corinthians 13, is applied practically in 1 Cor. 14: all in perfect accordance not only with what we read in Rom. 12; Eph. 4; Col. 2 19; 1 Thess. 5:14, 19, 20; and 1 Peter, 4:10, 11, but also with the Acts of the Apostles, where chiefly we see the working of the principle toward those "without" (Acts 8:1-4, 5-12, 35, 40; Acts 11:19-21; Acts 18:24-28). If the Holy Ghost abides for ever with us, according to the Saviour's Word, if He still raises up men of God to preach to the world, or to teach and otherwise build up believers, is it to be owned practically now as then? If He works in Christ's members as of old, in every way which the need of souls and the glory of the Lord demand, has He abandoned the principle and the practice which these Scriptures intimate, for the traditions of yesterday, or the inventions of today? Are 1 Cor. 12, 14 and the other passages no longer applicable? At first, no doubt, there were those who laid down the foundation of the Church, and there were also gifts in

the way of signs to unbelievers, which no longer appear. But has Christ ceased to act as Head of the Church in giving the gifts of evangelists, pastors and teachers? And if Scripture never speaks of a human appointment of these, any more than of apostles and prophets (Eph. 4), are we to give up the Word for the commandments of men, who would shut the door which the Lord has opened? Or are we to confess that He abides faithful, spite of the faithlessness of men, and that He graciously continues the supply of men endowed from on high for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ? If so, the ground of Article 23 is renounced; for it supposes that the free action of the Spirit no longer subsists, that immediate gifts from Christ are not to be found, and that now, contrary to the practice of the Apostolic Church, a human call must be the rightful prelude to ministering in the congregation.

Mr. Carey, however, cites Hey for the so-called Apostolic Fathers, Clement and Polycarp. But the question is not, whether there were men duly ordained as presbyters, which I admit fully, but whether the divine plan was not to leave the assembly open to the direct guidance of the Spirit, subject only to the Word. The same Paul who ordained elders, has legislated by inspiration for God’s assembly. What Clement, or the early church of Rome, says to the Corinthians, has no such authority nor stamp of perfectness, as that which Paul wrote to the same Church. Is it not singular that the word of men seems to some more weighty, clear and decisive than the Word of God? And yet it is consistent if the object be to find an excuse for departing from Scripture. Next, it is more than doubtful that Clemens R means the laity, (1 Cor. 11)

among Christians; for he has been just speaking of the Jewish High-priest, Priests and Levites. Professor Gieseler will not be accused of a Party object; yet he distinctly maintains that the passage refers entirely to the Old Testament, not to that class of thought which soon began to trace a close correspondence between the Levitical priesthood and Christian ministers. Clement of Alexandria seems to be really the first who uses the word clergy in the ecclesiastical sense; but this was a century after; and he is as loose a Christian writer as one could well conceive. Are these the men for whom we are to leave the commandments of the Lord through His holy apostles? Besides, Clement of Rome is an awkward witness for Mr. Carey for, in chapter 42 of the genuine epistle, he not only ignores the distinction, essential to Anglicanism, between the bishop and the presbyter, but identifies them as descriptive of the same person and office. In this, he follows the New Testament (Acts 20:17, 28; Phil. 1:1; Titus, 1:5, 7; and 1 Peter, 5:1, 2), which "the Consecration of Bishops" contradicts. Candid Episcopalians, like Deans Alford and Waddington, own the common mistake and allow that in Scripture the terms bishop and elder, or presbyter, were used synonymously and indiscriminately.

But Mr. Carey professes his readiness to meet me on what I must thank him for calling "my own ground" — Holy Writ only. My "assertions rest (says he) on the transparent fallacy, that because it is the Lord who calls, sends and gives gifts, therefore He does so immediately, and not through men empowered to that effect." But here we are again doomed to disappointment; for, instead of a Scriptural testimony, there is first an

argument from human government to the Spirit's sovereignty in the Church! (pp. 22, 23.)

When Scripture is at length ventured on, these are the texts adduced: 2 Tim. 1:6; 1 Tim. 4:14; Acts, 8:18, 19. But Timothy's case was not one of mere ordination, and there is not a tittle of evidence to show that he was an elder or bishop, though an "evangelist" we know he was. The Apostle, according to prophecies, and associating the presbytery with himself, laid hands on Timothy and communicated a positive gift (χάρισμα), and not a mere local office of eldership. Is it pretended that there is the faintest analogy between this and modern "orders?" If it be, the pretension is false, and the ceremony an imposture, unless there is the conveyance then and there of a proper gift; if it be not (as most churchmen allow), the argument is a sophism. The writer knew well that I never denied, in an extraordinary case such as this, that a gift might be conferred by an apostle. The true point is, whether, when the Lord gave an apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher, man's appointment was also requisite in order to the lawful exercise of ministry. I denied this, which Mr Carey was bound to prove; but he does not seem to understand the question before us. Timothy's case has nothing to do with it, and comes under another category. Still less happy is the appeal to the gift of the Spirit in Acts 8, unless the argument is that every Christian was then of the clergy, as the Apostle Peter calls the flock. The matter in debate is not a special conveyance of gift, nor the common gift of the Spirit to all Christians, but the necessity of ordination for one who is already gifted of God before he can duly minister in the congregation.

As for the case of Matthias (pp. 23, 24), it has not one feature in common with ordination or appointment by men, though dissenters, and some churchmen, it seems, claim it for their respective ceremonies. Perhaps they are both misled by the words “ordained to be” (Acts, 1:22) for which the English version has no authority whatever, as every scholar ought to know. A passage from another tract of mine is cited as “a curious commentary.” because it drew attention to the casting of lots, and to the time of filling up the vacant apostolate, i.e., before the Holy Ghost was given:- facts, which distinguish the whole case from all those which can be fairly reasoned on as a precedent for ordinary appointment. This, I should have thought, must have commended itself to every intelligent Christian, and the more, as it is evident neither Churchman, Independent, nor Presbyterian casts lots for their ministers. Mr. Carey is inexcusably wrong in every point of view, and especially in implying that I think the Apostles were wrong. It is my critic only who is wrong, not they. For the Lord chose Matthias, and he was not appointed by man; and there was no mistake whatever, but God’s solemn sanction. These confident statements are a mere tissue of error. The leading thought is that I regard ordination as an arbitrary usurpation of Christ’s function; but this is the most complete misapprehension of my view. For I admit ordination, as an undeniable truth and a grave and godly distinction, in the elders or bishops appointed by Apostles or their envoys. As to Matthias, I have therefore neither “shift” nor “theory and if there was the least trace of ordination in the case, I should accept and repeat it with all simplicity, as one ought. But it is only the “theory” of men (chiefly dissenters) who have never properly investigated the

circumstances. Was it too much to expect that Mr. Carey should be tolerably acquainted with his own best divines, not to speak of the early ecclesiastical writers? He sneers at a comment which I had held for years before I knew it was the judgment of Chrysostom, and adopted in the learned Bingham's "Antiquities of the Christian Church," book iv, ch. i. § l., from which I proceed to quote: "St. Chrysostom (Hom. v. in 1 Tim.) says 'they used this method [i.e. lots], because as yet the Holy Ghost was not descended on them, and they had not at this time the power of choosing by inspiration [Chrysostom thus lays himself far more open, than any word of mine is, to the offensive imputations of Mr. Carey]; and therefore they committed the business to prayer, and left the determination to God."' Is this like appointment by man? Bingham adds that "interpreters generally agree that there was something extraordinary in it." Am I not, then, justified in regarding the argument of pp. 23-25 as a "curious commentary" on Mr. Carey's judgment of Matthias' case, and on the fact that interpreters generally, including the ablest and staunchest Anglicans, agree with my conviction of its exceptional character against his perversion of it to appointment by men? I abhor the thought that either Jewish prejudice or usurpation characterised the blessed Apostles in the matter - but I must insist that, far from choosing, they left the decision between Matthias and Joseph exclusively to the Lord. "Thou, Lord, which knowest the heart of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen." They did not vote, but after the solemn Jewish style, Prov. 16: 33, they left the whole disposal to the Lord; so that any peculiar or etymological stress laid on συγκατεψίσθη (which I presume is meant by printing the Greek) is fanciful and

fallacious. If taken strictly for voting, it would point to election by the 120, and not by the eleven, as Dean Alford interprets verse 23 in opposition to Mr. Carey. But I am satisfied that the prayer and the lots prove "numbered with" to be the true rendering, as in the common Bible, and that interpretation, criticism, and argument are thus alike unsound.

Again, there is no difficulty to my mind in the Apostles ordaining elders (p. 25). But along with this fact, I have pressed other facts, which are often forgotten: first, that there were whole classes of gifted men, not elders, who actively exercised their ministry in and out of the assembly, the Holy Ghost maintaining the fullest opening to speak, by whom He would, even on the most solemn public occasions, when all came together into one place (1 Cor. 14); and, secondly, that though it was required for a bishop that he should be apt to teach, rule was the great object in the office, and public teaching only an accessory, however precious, which depended on a gift never demanded, and therefore might be or not in an elder. Mr. Carey cites 1 Tim. 5:17, and gives us a version which he calls "more literal;" but I confess the aim of the one and the advantage of the other are beyond my comprehension. It is quite incorrect to speak of "two kinds of elders." (which is a Presbyterian notion, not an Anglican one). Those labouring in the word and doctrine are only special individuals among the elders who take the lead or preside well; just as in verse 8, "two kinds" of persons to be cared for are not meant, but among one's own, special heed is claimed for the members of one's household. It is mere oversight that I assume that among any group of elders you please, there was none that laboured in the Word. But it is pure imagination

that “teaching elders” were one class distinct from “ruling elders.” The truth is precisely what I have already stated; not that all rulers were elders, but that all elders were appointed to rule, and that some of these might labour in the Word and teaching, if they had a gift of this character in addition to their necessary capacity for ruling. All must be “apt to teach;” but not one was necessarily a “teacher.”* In short, ministering in the congregation was open to every one whom the Holy Ghost so led; and an “elder” might never so minister in his life. Elders are never confounded with teachers. The former was a local charge to which competent authority appointed such as had the due qualifications; the latter is a gift in the unity of the body at large, and consequently entirely independent of that appointment which the former demanded. Many a man might be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convince the gainsayers, who could not unfold the word consecutively in public, like a teacher; and yet he might possess other qualities moral and circumstantial which fit a man for eldership, and which many teachers have not, I appeal, as the proof, to all the Scriptures which treat of the subject. Elders are nowhere in the lists of gifts. Teachers, evangelists, etc., are never on the footing of appointment by men.

* Listen again to the same Dr. Gieseler, who will not be suspected of the slightest affinity for the “Brethren,” save by those equally strangers to his views and theirs. “it was by no, means any part of the duty of the elders to teach, although the Apostle wishes that they may he apt to teach (διδακτικοί) (1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 2:23, [which last text is clearly inapposite]). The power of speaking and exhortation was considered rather the free gift of

the Spirit (χάρισμα πνευματικόν) and was possessed by many of the Christians, though exercised in different ways (prophets, — teachers, — speaking with tongues, 1 Cor. 12:28-31; 1 Cor. 14.) There was as yet no distinct order of clergy," etc. Text-book of Eccles. Hist. vol. i. p. 58. This witness is true, and may serve to show some that the existence of elders, even if ordained by the Apostles, has nothing to do with the question of a clergy; which last only sprang up in dark days, when the appointed local officers (irregularly appointed too, I believe) contrived to put down all exercise of gift in the assembly, save through themselves.

Hence, 1 Cor. 12:28 is manifestly and wholly against Mr. Carey's object (p. 27); for it classes teachers with prophets, etc., whom nobody pretends to have been appointed by men but only by God. And as to the assumption that "governments" mean "ruling elders" or "elders," I ask him for his proof; or rather, I tell him calmly, he has none. At best," government" may have been a gift which ought to be in him who might desire to be an elder, as "helps" may have been for deacons. But it is against the context and the verse to import local charges here. Were gifts of healing or diversities of tongues ordained? The idea is absurd evidently, but not more really so than ordaining "helps" and "governments," which clearly mean gifts, χαρίσματα, and not persons nor offices either. It is false, then, that 1 Cor. 12:28, "speaks of God's setting up in the Church 'ruling elders,"' and quite clear that the verse corroborates the general testimony of Scripture, that "teachers," who are never in the same class-list with "elders," were independent of human appointment like "apostles" and "prophets," with whom they are linked.

Possibly Mr. Carey may, as I am sure others will, see his error on this head, when it is considered that, though "the seven" in Acts 6 were appointed only to serve tables, we find one of them teaching, in Acts 7, and another preaching in Acts 8, both with amazing power from God. Assuredly, though only ordained to an external or, as some would say, a secular work, they too were worthy of double honour; but who would endure the argument that there were "two kinds" of deacons, one preaching and teaching, and the other simply serving? The truth is, that the office of governing, or of service, was that for which the elder, or the deacon, was appointed by men, though of course on the perception in them, by proper judges, of suitable qualities from God. But whether elders and deacons taught or preached depended not on their offices but on the question, whether, beside these, they had received a gift to that end from the Lord. Every one so gifted was bound to exercise it — the elders no more than the rest; and the Church is equally bound, in Scripture, to receive all that comes from God. Accordingly, in Acts 21:8, we read "of Philip, the evangelist, which was one of the seven." Human appointment gave him, no doubt very rightly, the latter office; gift from God constituted him an "evangelist," or messenger of glad tidings. For this is the true application of the term, not a writer of Christ's life, as Eusebius interprets it, and perhaps most men to this day. So little, indeed, are these early writers to be trusted for nice points of church-government, that they misstate the commonest facts of Scripture. For instance, the "father of Ecclesiastical history" (iii. 31; v. 24) actually confounds Philip, the evangelist, with the Apostle of the same name. The Latin interpreter tries to cover the blunder in both places, and translates Φ. τὸν

τῶν δώδεκα ἀποστόλων, Ph. unum ex septem diaconis! but what will not men do or say? Others before Eusebius, it seems, had fallen into the same error.

In the footnote to page 27, Mr. Carey considers it very fallacious to infer, as I have done, from the silence of Scripture, which shows an apostle, or his delegate, with an express and inspired letter of credentials ordaining elders, but no successor nor provision for one. As God arranged all, my argument is that the omission is not accidental but left thus by His intention. Mr. Carey thinks that the silence of Scripture as fairly implies the contrary. Now, the only fallacy here is his own. Does he not know that the burden of proof invariably falls on him who affirms? He who asserts that adequate ordaining power was meant to abide, is bound to prove it; whereas no such obligation lies on him who denies it. The silence of Scripture, therefore, if real, is valid and fatal to a positive claim.

The sum, then, of what has been shown is, that Scripture presents the assembly of God, under the active guidance of the Holy Ghost, and maintains His right to use any or all the members of Christ, if it so please Him, in the various departments of public worship and ministry within (1 Cor. 12 — subject, of course, to His own regulations in 1 Cor. 14), and in preaching, etc., without (Acts of the Apostles passim); that these gifts from the Lord never needed nor admitted of human sanction, choice, call or ordination, in order to their lawful exercise, though an Apostle might be the channel of a gift; and that, over and above, there were, in Apostolic times, local charges or officers formally ordained or appointed by Apostles or their delegates commissioned for that purpose. The divine

system of gifts is perfectly consistent with that of the local functionaries, who became elders or deacons, not by possessing a gift simply, but by virtue of due investiture. Man soon began to confound these two distinct but consistent things, by enlarging the sphere of ordination and excluding the exercise of gift without that form. On this error, and daring rebellion against the title of the Lord and the free operations of the Holy Ghost in the Church, rests the fabric of the clergy. As long as there was liberty (not for the flesh, which I need hardly say is not contended for, but) for the Holy Ghost to work by whom He would, the idea of a clergy is impossible: the elders or deacons, where they existed, fulfilled their office, of course, and if they had gifts for public ministry, they were like others to use them; but God was still owned as ever present, and present to employ the various members according to His own will. By degrees the truth on this subject faded and was lost in practice, and at last even in theory, when the officials, no longer even duly appointed, absorbed into their hands all ministry in the congregation; and this is the doctrine of Article 23, and the sole practice of Anglicanism, both in direct antagonism to God's Word.

Article 26, though it prescribes enquiry into evil ministers, has for its main object their official maintenance if the enquiry be neglected or fail. It employs the name of Christ, by whom they are supposed to act, as a justification for hearing the Word and receiving the sacraments from them. Does the Christian want proof that the recognition of such men, when their evil doctrine or conduct is certain, is a dishonour to the Holy Ghost? Here all is consistent error. By baptismal regeneration "every parishioner" is fictitiously made a

member of Christ, faith being lowered in the Catechism to a stedfast belief of God's promises made to them (not in Christ, but) in baptism. So now, the only lawful call to the ministry being limited to those chosen and called "by men," the natural result is the exclusion of godly persons who are satisfied that ordination to preach or teach is unscriptural, and the acceptance of many who would sign any form and submit to any "orders" to hold a living. Spiritual instinct might preserve the simplest from owning as Christ's servant an unconverted person, who manifested no gift, and preached another gospel which is not another. But this Article does its best to hush all to sleep and to establish the unworthy equally with the true minister. The Apostle anathematizes such; but the Article says we may use their ministry. He tells Titus that deceivers' mouths must be stopped; but it declares that such do minister by Christ's commission. He warns the man of God to withdraw from such as consent not to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ; but the Establishment binds its members to cleave to them, if ordained, as lawful ministers. Christians must choose between God's will and man's — above all, let them beware of their own.

Passing by Article 35 let me observe that Articles 36, 37 bind on the consciences of Anglicans a headship, and a ministry no less foreign to the Word than the wholesale process of christianizing a population by baptism. The Ordinal says, there have been from the Apostles' time Bishops, Priests and Deacons. If it be meant in apostolic days, it is false; if afterwards, doubtless it soon crept in, but that it had divine or apostolic sanction is another matter. In Scripture, it is perfectly clear that bishops and presbyters are one and the same class. Deacons too

did not constitute the unmeaning noviciate we see now-a-days. The office was a grave and useful one, with a definite and peculiar object, and requiring special qualifications, not a temporary stepping-stone for every clerical aspirant of three or four-and-twenty. In Scripture, even where the assembly might be small, we always read of a plurality of these officers — never of a bishop, or an elder or deacon; still less do we find a diocesan bishop governing a large district with all its assemblies. Philippi, for instance, had its bishops and deacons. Plainly, therefore, the Establishment does not even outwardly resemble the original in Scripture. Add to this the Sovereign's chief government in Estates Ecclesiastical, with the congé d'élire to the dean and chapter for electing a bishop designate, and the discordant picture is complete. Far be it from me, however, to enlarge on a subject so dismal: what has been exposed is the system on its own showing, without attention to a single page in the black book of abuses.

But another and more serious remark is needed. Much is said of the Apostolic and early Fathers, especially by those who are not very familiar with their remains. Now I do not envy those who despise such men as Athanasius, Chrysostom, Theodoret, Hilary, Augustine and Jerome, nor even Origen and Tertullian, spite of many wild views. Had the best of these followed close after the Apostles, the difference of inspired and non-inspired would have been obvious to a spiritual man. But in the providence of God no writer followed for a century, save of the feeblest calibre — none but men singularly deficient in power of the Spirit and intelligence in Scripture, or even in commanding human qualities, if we except Clement of Rome. To whom are

we to turn from the Word of God for light and guidance? Is it to the Pseudo-Barnabas with his cabalistic trifles? Is it to the Shepherd of Hermas, with his worse than puerile visions? Clement adheres most to Scripture, and speaks of bishops and deacons, his sobriety contrasting favourably with the incessant exaltation of the three orders, particularly his own, in the letters of Ignatius. I do not wonder that some attribute Episcopacy, as distinct from the elders, to the president of Antioch: for his zeal in putting forward that new thing would be not unnatural in its inventor. What would be thought of an Archbishop or a Pope who urged the faithful to regard the Bishop in the place of God, the Presbyters as the Apostles, and the, Deacons as the command of God? What, if he gave such a voucher as this, "the Spirit declared to me these words, Do ye nothing without the Bishop?" His piety might be incontestible, his subsequent martyrdom always claiming our respect; but a new revelation from the Spirit in support of a dogma about the bishop, unheard of in Scripture and incompatible with teaching really inspired, can only have been at best a delusion, naturally in keeping with his one idea. Polycarp's letter to the Philippians is Christian in its tone, but it contains no decisive evidence on the point.

But we may go a step farther. There is no ancient ecclesiastical writer more worthy of credit in his place than Irenaeus. Yet thus he writes in his third book against heresies (chap. xiv. 2): "In Mileto enim convocatis episcopis et presbyteris, qui erant ab Epheso et a reliquis proximis civitatibus," etc. Now here we have the same inspired document (Acts 20) which was — before the Bishop of Lyons; and we know beyond

controversy that he fell into a twofold error. For, 1st, the comparison of verses 17 and 28 proves, not that bishops and presbyters assembled at Miletum, but that the elders were bishops; and, 2nd, they were the elders or bishops of the Church in Ephesus, and not a conclave of bishops from Ephesus and the cities near it, each city yielding its own bishop. Is it insinuated that so true a saint deliberately warped the Word of God and falsified the facts? I think nothing of the sort; but that, on the most charitable supposition, the ecclesiastical government then existing blunted the writer's vision to such an extent that he was unconscious of his own distortion of the Scriptural account. Does any Anglican tax me with a theory that leads me to misjudge Irenaeus? They will forgive me for thinking that I have incomparably less to influence my judgment than a professional divine, dissenting or nationalist; but if they doubt still, let them hear their own Dean Alford's comment on the discrepancy between Acts 20 and Irenaeus. "This circumstance began very early to contradict the growing views of the apostolical institution and necessity of prelatical episcopacy." Then, after pointing out the double misrepresentation substantially as I have done, he adds, "so early did interested and disingenuous interpretations begin to cloud the light which Scripture might have thrown on ecclesiastical questions. The E. V. has hardly dealt fairly in this case with the sacred text, in rendering ἐπισκόπους, ver. 28, 'overseers,' whereas it ought there, as in all other places, to have been 'bishops,' that the fact of elders and bishops having been originally and apostolically synonymous might be apparent to the ordinary English reader, which now it is not."

In fact, after the canon of Scripture closes, so far is the primitive Church from being a safe guide, that its best lights contradict Scripture, one another and even themselves, and on this topic perhaps more than most others. Thus, Clement of Alexandria (Paed. iii. 12) regards the three orders as distinguished in Scripture; and so do Origen (in Matt. 19) and Tertullian (De Monog. 11, 12). On the other hand, the weightier names of Theodoret, Chrysostom, etc., expressly affirm that in Scripture bishops and elders are identical, and strive to make the bishop of their day answer to the apostle or apostolic deputy of Scripture. But even here all is confusion, and no wonder. For the association of the presbytery with the apostle in the so-called ordination of Timothy is no trifling difficulty to the Fathers, as it is still to Episcopalians; and the same ancient writers, who elsewhere identify the bishops and elders of Scripture, insist, in commenting on 1 Tim. 4:14, that here the elders mean officials of apostolic dignity or bishops in the later sense! Theodoret also falls into an error which Chrysostom, as far as I observe, seems to have avoided the error of making a prelate of Epaphroditus, because he is called the messenger or apostle of the Philippians. But this is evidently unfounded; for he, and the brethren who are similarly styled messengers or apostles of the churches in 2 Cor. 8:23, were in this the mere channels and representatives of the church's bounty — a slender basis for the episcopacy of any epoch. — I here conclude this part of my task. It is for others to judge whether the evidence does not prove, not only that Anglicanism, in its bishops, priests and deacons, has no real claim to Scriptural support, but that the Article, relative to this subject, insists on orders which thoroughly differ from the offices of Scripture, and render impossible, within its

own range, the operations of the Spirit by the various joints and bands of Christ's body, according to the just freedom of Scripture. Reference to the Fathers will not justify the Establishment; but it does prove how early, and wide, and growing was the declension, not only from apostolic principles and practice, but even from the knowledge of what they were.

The silence of the Articles, as to certain weighty truths, while temporary points of controversy occupy no small space, is substantially acknowledged and unsatisfactorily explained. Nobody expects a full compendium of divinity; but, on the other hand, the Articles are orderly, and rise evidently from the foundations of the Trinity, the person and work of Christ, the Godhead of the Holy Ghost, the Scriptures, etc., to the lighter matters with which they close, so as to indicate the design of an adequate confession. My charge is that they signally fail in this respect. Mr. Carey pleads that the Services, etc, may teach what is here omitted. Granted; but what of the truths omitted everywhere? The "dead and ominous silence" he has totally misunderstood. Far from insinuating that which he fancies, I agree with him that regeneration, for instance, is not defined in the more formal standard, because the view of the Establishment is expressed unmistakeably in the Baptismal Services. The sole regeneration of the Spirit they know is in and through that initiatory rite. If this was not "ominous" in my critic's eyes, it was probably because his doctrine is the same; but that a large section of the worthiest Anglicans, lay and clerical, pronounce that doctrine heretical, and resort to eccentric interpretations or practical indifference, so as to remain there with some

colour of consistency, is too well known to need proof. What a relief it would have been to their consciences, had there only been an Article, or a clause in one, attributing regeneration, as Scripture does, to the Spirit's use of the Word! The dead silence of the Articles is ominous, precisely because the Baptismal Services are so explicit against the truth.

The citations from the Services prove what was not denied; but the truth comes out in page 29: "The reason why the 39 Articles do not dwell more on the Holy Spirit's operations, is, as I apprehend, simply this: that on this point there was no difference of opinion between the Churches of England and of Rome." Here we fully concur; but what an admission! Had I said that Anglicanism and Romanism differ in nothing as to the Spirit's operations, what an outcry on my bad spirit! I believe that it is true, however, and of most "ominous" import. The Establishment joins hands with Rome in the guilty recognition of an ordinance substituted for the quickening power of the Spirit, who acts on souls through the Word which reveals Christ, — joins with Rome in the guilty non-recognition of the Spirit's abiding presence in God's assembly, there to maintain the Headship of Christ (not of a Pope or a Sovereign), and there to distribute His manifestations to each member of the body as He will.

From my specimen of slighted truths, the promised kingdom, Israel's restoration and the blessing of the earth under Christ's reign are singled out, as to which silence is thought better than words. Now I do not contend for imposing these or other Articles; but I cannot sympathize with the feeling or the judgment which sees wisdom in omitting these and the other

truths I had pointed out, and in insisting on such "doubtful disputations" as are found e.g. in Articles 34-38. Is the Queen's ecclesiastical supremacy so sure and momentous that it should be embodied there? Or is the Lord's assumption of the kingdom so questionable in Scripture and so insignificant in itself, that it should be thrust out privily if not beat openly uncondemned? The early Fathers, who differ more or less about episcopacy, are here unanimous till Origen; but what of that, if it does not fall in with things as they are? What a pity a still "wiser silence" did not prevail in 1661-2, not to speak of the London synod of 1552, with its 42 Articles, or that of 1562, with the 39 still extant! The Act of Uniformity (was it "wise?") drove out near 2000 devoted clergymen and created an enormous schism till this day, by forcing conscience on things indifferent, which no truth of God is. But, with too many, whatever is, is right.

On Baptismal Regeneration no more need be said, as Mr. Carey declines to enter on the subject (page 30) — no doubt for sufficient reasons. But he also fails to notice the strong charges laid against the priestly absolution and other parts of the Liturgy. The prayers for forgiveness he seeks to vindicate by the Lord's Prayer in Matt. 6 and Luke 11.* But the difference is, that the disciples, for whose closet-use the Lord gave this prayer, were God's children; whereas Mr. Carey will not deny that the Anglican Service, (as not I say merely, but Wheatly proves,) contemplates condemned penitent criminals who have not the Spirit of adoption. Were the disciples "tied and bound with the chain of their sins," as is said of worshippers in the Establishment? I cannot acquit pp. 30-32 of want of candour: for Mr. Carey had my words before him, that "I cordially allow the value to

God’s children of confessing their sins,” etc. Why, then, should he reason at length as if I denied it? The true question is: Does God’s Word authorize His Church to unite with the world in confessing sin in order to pardon? Of course, the Christian may sin, and if so, is bound to confess it — yet even here always as a child of God; whereas the true service for the world is to have the Gospel preached to them, instead of presuming to join in Christian worship. All this is huddled together in the Services of the Establishment, and it is evident that Mr. Carey does not feel the confusion. John 13:10 maintains the believer’s peculiar standing, while it also prescribes for his failures; but neither pertains to “every parishioner.”

*The argument founded on the special design of Luke’s gospel for Gentile converts, as compared with Matthew’s gospel for Jews, is a total fallacy. For though it is clear that the Gentiles only came in after the descent of the Holy Ghost, it does not follow that it was meant for them to use the Lord’s prayer formally. That gospel would equally instruct them, if it simply revealed how the Lord taught His Jewish disciples to pray. The same gospel shows that the Twelve and the Seventy, when sent out by Christ, were forbidden to take purse or scrip. Does it follow that the converts, whether from Jews or Gentiles, after Pentecost, were to take neither on their missions? If it be said that Luke 22:32 gives new directions in the one cue, I answer that John 16:23-26 does as much in the other case. The accomplishment of redemption, and the gift of the Spirit to dwell in us, create new wants, and lead into a new ground and character of prayer; though all the Lord

gave His disciples abides for the eternal profit of the Church.

The “Brethren”

The answer to the second and closing part need not be long. Mr. Carey, not being at home in the subject, makes an apology (page 34) for possible inaccuracy, and complains that my former tract does not furnish enough information about “Brethren’s” principles and their practical working but, strange to say, he does not even now indicate by a single question the particulars on which chiefly he desires to be informed. With every wish to gratify him, it is difficult to anticipate such vague wants within the ordinary limits of a pamphlet. These strictures, I own, are opened with every kindliness. Indeed, the author avows that, far from blaming the “Brethren,” he shares the feelings in which their movement began, but laments that due heed was not paid to the prophetic parables of our Lord! Such a remark is a plain proof how little they, or their ordinary teaching, can be known to him who made it. Had he accused them of being carried away by overmuch attention to prophecy in general, including these parables, it might have seemed less strange. But those who are ever so moderately acquainted with spiritual workings in Christendom, and among the rest with the history of the “Brethren,” or with their writings, will not say that any community has been so remarkable for diligent study of these very subjects, and, I may add, of the Word as a whole — it is not for me to say with what measure of success.

But curiously enough, the remark is as wrong in itself, as in its application. For we are told that our Lord has

given us in these parables (the Tares, Drag-net, Virgins, etc.) “the picture of His Church” (p. 33). This I must flatly deny. They are expressly representations of “the kingdom of heaven.” It is easy for any man who has never pondered the matter deeply, to call mine “a strange assertion” (p. 49); but it is the merest assumption to say that the kingdom is the Church, and an assumption which at the first step contradicts our Lord’s own interpretation. How often must one repeat that the field is (not the Church but) the world? It is the world since it has been the sowing-ground of good seed and bad; the vast sphere of Christendom, comprising nationalism and dissent, in all their varieties, Popery, etc., as well as the intermingled believers, of course. But there is no reference to the assembly, or church, as such, in any one of these parables: let them who so say, attempt the proof, or rather let them enquire, and they may learn that they have none. These beautiful prefigurations of the Christian profession here below would be true, if the doctrine of the Church, as announced by our Lord, and the corporate development brought out by the Holy Ghost through the Apostle Paul, had never been revealed. The two things, therefore, are in themselves distinct. Indeed, we need not go so far; for Matt. 16:18, 19 may suffice to convince a simple mind, that connected as they no doubt are, the Church and the kingdom are thoroughly distinct, and that all reasoning built on their assumed identity wants a foundation. “Upon this rock,” says our Lord, “I will build my church..... And I will give unto thee the keys (not of the Church, which is a gross delusion, nor of heaven, which would be as bad or worse, but) of the kingdom of heaven,” etc. Our Lord in the same context distinguishes His Church from that kingdom of which He had already

said so much. It is contrary to every principle of sound interpretation to say, without evidence, that such different terms are equivalent. And this is yet more confirmed by Matt. 18 where we have “the kingdom” fully spoken of at the beginning and the close; and in the midst of it, “the church” is so introduced that you could not substitute “the kingdom” without ruining the sense. To tell a thing to “the assembly,” and to hear “the assembly,” Is very intelligible; but how tell “the kingdom?” The things differ no less than the names; and nothing can be less reasonable than this habit of taking for granted what ought to be proved from Scripture.

The next charge is only serious as evincing sad unbelief. Tradition is insisted on “as being subciliary (sic) to Scripture, and as fixing the true sense of Scripture. ‘The Brethren,’ I believe, reject Universal Tradition altogether. Have they ever considered that in so doing they leave us without a New Testament? Why do we receive the New Testament as the Word of God except upon the authority of this Universal Tradition?” (pp. 34, 35.) Now I can honestly say that I have sought to spare my clerical opponents, and that had any brethren in communion with us committed the errors which fill their pages, I could not have made allowances for them, because they enjoy incomparably better means of scriptural instruction. But I happen to know as a fact, that unpretending Christians have read this passage with horror, and I assuredly reject the reasoning as equally hollow and mischievous. For it quietly assumes that God is incompetent to make men responsible by His own testimony — the root of all scepticism, superstitions or rationalist. Now I take the bull by the horns and affirm that, whatever may be the value of testimony,

from friends or foes during eighteen centuries, for silencing cavils, there is no living faith but that which is wrought through God's Word, received on His direct authority without any external warrant whatever. If received on the authority of Universal Tradition, it is not believing God but man. The Word of God proves itself to the conscience and puts man by itself under the responsibility of crediting it, because God cannot speak without morally binding man to know and hear Him, for none speaks like Him. And as to fixing the true sense of Scripture, it is the work of the Holy Ghost, not of tradition, which has produced nothing but ignorance, doubt and incredulity. I challenge any priest of Rome or England to show a single instance where Universal Tradition has fixed the true sense of Scripture. "Brethren" do indeed abjure a principle which, forgetting the essentially divine character of the Word, sets aside its sufficiency, no less than the Holy Ghost's faithful presence and power to use that Word. Tradition, as a necessary witness to prove the one and the agent of the other, I denounce as a rebel. None denies the transmission of the Old Testament through the Jews, nor of the New and Old through the various and opposed channels of Christendom; but it is as absurd to think that we receive the Bible on their authority, as to imagine that a letter to A. B. from the Queen is only received on the authority of the postman, who delivers it. The links of the postal chain may be honest or not; but the royal letter retains its own independent and inalienable authority. The consequence of the argument is, not that we are left without the New Testament, but that Mr. Carey is misled by his error of Universal Tradition to abandon a divine and accept a human ground for his faith, if faith in Christendom can be called

faith at all. There is no error more characteristic of Rome or more perilous.

The third charge is a mixture of unsoundness and misunderstanding. Far from viewing human appointment as erroneous in itself, I hold, as strongly as our censor, that regular eldership required not only certain prescribed qualifications, but the seal of an apostle or of his duly commissioned delegate. Why does not a clergyman produce some such guarantee for his ordination? He cannot; he has no more than the peculiar ceremony and testimonial of his own sect. Why then pretend to what they have not! If you insist on the desirableness of rightly ordained elders, is it not at least as desirable to have apostles who might ordain elders, or authenticate a competent substitute to do the work? Neither Anglicans nor Papists have apostles or charges that depend on them, one whit more than the "Brethren." The difference is, that we are content, in the present distracted state of things, to walk as brethren, gladly and in love using any and every gift for mutual edification; whereas our opponents set up, without scriptural authority, to imitate apostles and ordain elders, because they or their envoys did. Which course is most comely, humble and obedient? We act according to what we are, they according to what they assuredly are not.

The Word of God furnishes ample guidance for godly order, where there were or could be no elders. The Patristic tradition, "no Church without a Bishop," is a flagrant unequivocal contradiction of God's Word. For, on the contrary, the Acts of the Apostles prove as a rule, that it was only after a lapse of time, and in general on a repeated visit, that the Apostles appointed bishops; as

indeed the very requisites (1 Tim. 3) for the office imply time to acquire a known character for godliness, gravity and ruling power. Yet were the churches as truly owned by God and men before these officers were installed, as afterwards. So, in Romans (Rom. 12), we find exhortations which suppose the members in full activity, and among the rest that of the ruler; but not a word about elders or bishops. Indeed they could have had none; for neither apostles nor apostolic men had up to the date of the epistle ever reached the imperial city. Again, 1 Cor. imply just the same thing. Rich gifts were there, and plenty of ministry — too much, it would seem; but elders nowhere appear. The household of Stephanas devoted themselves in an orderly way (ἔταξαν ἑαυτούς) to the ministry of the saints, though all the evidence clearly shows they were not appointed by men; and yet the apostle commends it in an inspired letter, and even beseeches the saints to submit themselves to such and to every one associated in the work and labouring. This is precisely what “Brethren” do, and what is now unknown to “the universal language of Christendom.” The Galatians were exhorted that he who is taught in the word should communicate to him that teacheth in all good things. This may be and ought to be, elders or no elders; and in fact, none are named here. We have seen already the bright light cast on the subject in Eph. 4, whence bishops are necessarily excluded, though we know that in the church in that city there were several. In Philippi, too, there were expressly bishops and deacons; but this does not hinder the apostle from exhorting his true yoke-fellow (certainly not his wife, as Clemens A., Eusebius, etc., say, but probably Epaphroditus) to help (not “those women which,” but) Euodia and Syntyche, seeing that they contended along

with him in the gospel (not that they preached of course, but they unobtrusively laboured and shared the apostle's trials in its spread) with Clement also and his other fellow-labourers, etc. The ordination of some, even where it was most valid, in no way hindered the free circulation of spiritual gift in the service of the faithful or in the gospel. The Colossian epistle is equally plain and instructive in another way; for the apostle had not personal knowledge of the assembly there, and there is no intimation of local charges - yet, Archippus, far from being repressed, is enjoined to take heed and fulfil the ministry he had received in the Lord, without one word of sanction from man. Still more evident is the inference from 1 Thess. 5, where the saints were in the freshness of youth (as it was too the apostle's earliest writing) and no officials are hinted at. Does this preclude godly order and oversight? In no wise. "We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." They had no appointment of men; but valuable as this was, where super-added by proper authority and according to God's Word, they had what always and intrinsically claimed respect, even where apostolic recognition could not be had.

I might add other testimonies, perhaps; but surely these may convince the most prejudiced mind, if willing to probe all to the bottom, that the provident wisdom of God, who dealt thus with the Church in early days, has not forgotten the difficulties of those whose desire is above all things to please Him by intelligent and lowly-minded obedience, now that self-will runs riot not only in the smaller parties, but in the larger and more ancient

bodies in Christendom. Even where apostolically chosen elders were, there was no hindrance to the spiritual ministry of any brother in the assembly, subject only to the divine regulations. But God took take that the fullest account of church-economy, discipline, the Lord's Supper, the worship and ministry of the assembly, should be in an epistle (1 Cor.) where elders are ignored. Important as these charges were, they are in no way essential. If there, elders render their help; if not there, the loss may be felt surely, but they are not so indispensable that the Church cannot have discipline, the Eucharist, gifts, etc., without elders. On this ground plain, solid and scripturally certain, "the Brethren" act; and their very trials, without and within, confirm their conviction, that, few and feeble as they are, they are doing His will in the present ruin-state of Christendom. Real gift manifests itself, just as a real Christian does, though in both cases all admit there may be doubtful instances in which the ready and sure resource is prayer to a God who never fails. The true credentials are from the Lord and King of kings, not from the lady who sits as a queen nor from her daughters. The Church in Scripture is never the source of ministry; Christ is, and He gives gifts unto men, who win confidence by their reality and fruits.*

*Mr. Carey repeats the mistake (p. 36) that I am bound to prove that "appointment by men" is forbidden! Not so: it is his business to prove it, if he can, inasmuch as he maintains it. No one is bound to prove a negative. Suppose a R. Cath. said The baptism of bells is not forbidden, a Protestant would be entitled to reply, You mistake the nature of proof and of reasoning: if you affirm, you must prove, or own that you have no proof.

At the same time, I have given the amplest evidence from God's Word, that the exercise of gift, without official nomination, in the congregation and outside, is an undeniable Scriptural truth. On the other hand my objection is not in proper cases, to "appointment by men," but to improper appointment by men not duly authorised.

The mission of Paul and Barnabas, in Acts 13, is dwelt on in page 36; but no sooner is there recourse to this forlorn hope, than page 37 warns, that the case must not be pressed "too far," and that even Mr. Carey does not maintain that it was "equivalent to what we understand by Ordination!" Why then throw dust in the eyes of the ignorant by such a reference? It is pressing it too far, if it is confessedly not ordination. I must, however, draw a stricter attention to the facts and words than my critic has done. For, 1, it was the Holy Ghost who directed and called. 2. Those called are said to be Apostles. Hear, ye men of order: what think you of prophets and teachers "appointing" their ecclesiastical superiors? 3. The inference that Paul was an apostle "by man" (which he must have been, if this was his appointment to that office by the teachers of Antioch,) is directly contradicted in Gal. 1: 1, 4. Commenting on "they sent him away," Mr. Carey has committed himself to the unpardonable offence of saying: "I need hardly point out that the word 'sent' is emphatic." I appeal to every scholar, Anglican or not: is it so? In verse 3, it is the general non-emphatic word ἀπέλυσαν, "they let them go," or "dismissed them. "I need hardly point out that it is the same word in Acts 4:21; Acts 5:40. If emphatic, Peter and John were "sent" by the Jewish rulers, elders and scribes. and Jason, etc, had their mission from the

heathen rulers of Thessalonica! (Acts 17:9.) The truth is, that it is a glaring mistake; for the word never has the emphatic force which is here assumed. On the other hand, in ver. 4 where the Holy Ghost (not man) is in question, the emphatic word ἐκπεμφθέντες is used. Their "mission," then, is said to be from the Spirit only; their "dismission," if you will, was from their "brethren just as in Acts 15:33. What, then, was the meaning of this transaction? Mr. Carey will be surprised to hear that, while it is never in the slightest degree approached either in Nationalism or Dissent, the "Brethren" have acted on its spirit, and would doubtless act from time to time, where they believed it really to apply. It is generally forgotten that Barnabas and Paul had both ministered in the highest rank (Paul, certainly, being an Apostle by divine call) for years before. What the Spirit here called them to, was a special mission among the heathen; and the imposition of hands with prayer and fasting by their fellow-labourers was not in the faintest degree an act of derivative authority as proper ordination is, but — what the Holy Ghost describes it in Acts 14:26 — a recommendation to the grace of God for this work. Acts 15:40 shows that the recommendation was repeated on a subsequent mission of the Apostle, and not improbably also the same godly order of prayer and fasting with laying on of hands. "Brethren" have done the same thing, when God made an honoured servant's path plain for a peculiar work, some of his fellow-labourers commending him to God's grace, precisely as in Acts 13.* But nobody dreamt of conferring either gift or authority.

* 2 Tim. 2:2 (p. 39) is constantly acted on amongst us by those, who are competent, which it is very easy to

discern. Just as Timothy communicated the truth he had gathered from the Apostle, so a servant now, who proves himself to be enlightened in these same truths, commits them to faithful but less taught men, that they may spread them to others also. But it is the effect of prepossession to call this appointment." It has not one feature peculiar to ordination.

As to the imaginary case put in pp. 37, 38, there is one grand omission in the account; it is forgotten that the "Brethren" believe, as did the early Christians, in the real presence of the Holy Ghost to control, restrain, guide and bless; while all admit that there may be failure, as in the individual saint, so in the assembly. But even in comparatively large assemblies of 200 or 300 communicants, so deep and general is the fear of going before the Lord, that they have far more reason to think there is too much shrinking back, rather than the too great eagerness to speak which strangers to us might imagine. Besides, we know the goodness and faithful care of God, who surely raises up and brings in men of weight, proved godliness, spiritual power, and profound acquaintance with His Word; the effect of which qualities He means to be felt wherever they exist. That an assembly of Christians thus acting being open to the sovereign action. of the Holy Ghost, is liable now as of old, to be tried by forward men, high or low, poor or rich, learned or unlearned, is quite true; but then there are scriptural ways for rectifying every disorder. And God is trusted, not the assembly's concurrence or pleasure, nor a clergy either.

With us, if a man mistakes his place and ministers without power, it is soon found out by others and generally by himself. But in Anglicanism the mistake is

fixed and irreparable; the misguided man goes on maintained in the error by the system, spite of every body and himself too. Which is most right?

The fourth point of objection is the “Brethren’s” cleaving to Scripture, not Creeds or Articles of faith which Mr. Carey tries to find in 1 Tim. 6:29; 2 Tim. 1:13, 14; Jude 3: need I overthrow a conclusion so preposterous? No doubt, the truth — the faith — is a most holy deposit to be kept at all cost, and in the form furnished in God’s Word; and so an Apostle enjoins on one and all. But is this a human Creed or Article? One reason why I object to Creeds is precisely because they are almost always inaccurate. Another is, because singling out certain truths, which are taken out of their living fulness in Christ, they give me mangled limbs, not the truth as in the Word. But the best reason of all is that with us it is a settled thing that God knows best how to provide for the wants of His Church; and if He gave them His Word and Spirit, not Creeds and Articles, we at least are not going to turn from His wisdom as displayed in the inspired Apostles and supplement it with the additions of the fourth and fifth centuries, not to speak of the sixteenth.

Mr. Carey suggests a practical view of the matter in pp. 40, 41. Be it so. The doctrine of Christ is assailed. Let him produce his Art. II.; I fall back “on my own ground” — Holy Writ only: which is safest and strongest? “The Son, which is the Word of the Father:” where do you find such language in Scripture? The feeble framework of man betrays itself here, as in the spurious clause of 1 John 5. The Holy Ghost always makes the Word and God, the Son and Father proper correlatives. Why should I sign an unscriptural error? What can a mistaken Article be if not a dead weight? Am I to trifle with conscience

and sign, in the things of God, as an expression of my faith, that which I believe to be a blunder of the Reformers? Or are you to fence with bold words before people less instructed than yourself, and pretend that it is all one and the same thing? or, bolder still perhaps, are you to blot out this obnoxious expression in some new edition of the Articles, as the Guernsey clergy seem to have done with the other clause on reconciliation, on which so much has been already said? Thus, in the French version of the English Liturgy (H. Brouard, 1833), they say, “pour réconcilier nous avec le Père;” and so it is in that of De La Rue, 1815. The Latin is the same as the English, “ut Patrem nobis reconciliaret.” Who authorised the change?

“Brethren” do not contend for unwritten Articles, but for the Written Word and its sufficiency by the power of the Spirit. Articles may fluctuate, as well as minds; they have done so already in Anglicanism, and they may again. but does God’s Word change? This, I repeat, is our ground, our only and our perfect standard. Not a single use can be assigned mistakenly to the Articles or Creeds, which is not true, without a mistake, of God’s Word. Have we not reason to be supremely thankful that, He has taught us to trust Himself and it? Strange to say, the unhappy person to whom Mr. Carey alludes (long repudiated by us as a blasphemer, p. 41), is the strongest instance we could furnish of the worthlessness of these formularies; for this individual, highly distinguished at Oxford and received by “Brethren” unsuspectingly, was a more diligent student of Confessions of Faith and a more strenuous maintainer of their value, than any man amongst us before or since. And I believe that his ardour for Creeds has grown since

the detection of his fundamental unsoundness as to Christ's person and relation to God. Moreover, error, as in this case, assumes new shapes; so that the bulwarks reared by the doctors of the fifth century would be vain to defend the truth against the innovations of the nineteenth. The true question is, whether we have not in the Word an infinitely better armoury already provided for all emergencies? This, at any rate, is the thesis of "Brethren:" let those who will, betake themselves to the feeble, faltering, spasmodic efforts of human wit or strength. As to what is said of a regular ministry, and of creeds, allow me to say that "Brethren" contend for a ministry more regular, because more Scriptural, and for the sole creed which requires no remodelling, even Scripture; and as to safeguards for preserving the truth, I wonder conscience is not ashamed. With heaps of clergy teaching the dregs of Popery, and Rationalism worse than Socinus ever did, without the semblance of a real check, is it possible a quiet clergyman can breathe such a sound? It is certain that among no Christians is there such care in maintaining sound doctrine as among "Brethren," Vagaries are rebuked habitually among us, which in many a sect around us would be accepted as beautiful and good and true. Not one principle distinctive of "Brethren" was adopted by Socinus. The Word and the Spirit of God, as the authoritative directory and the living power of the Church gathered round the person of Christ — on these foundations we stand. How great the contrast! The ignorance as to both us and Socinus is complete. The very essence of his ecclesiastical system (to say nothing of dogma) was the right of man to change what the Lord instituted; and this right, or wrong, Anglicanism has freely used, not the "Brethren," among whom baptism, and the Lord's

supper are observed with the utmost solemnity, as free from Socinian laxity as from Anglican superstition.

What principle of “Brethren,” I demand, did Socinus ever adopt? The perfect sufficiency of the Word? The personal presence and power of the Spirit? The fact is, he opened his career by writing in defence of the Polish Unitarians, and he closed it by reducing their anti-trinitarian opinions to a system, and their scattered parties to a pretty compact body, with a clergy like their neighbours. His views of sin, justification, baptism, the Lord’s supper, and ministry, not to speak of the denial of the proper Deity of Christ and the personality of the Holy Ghost, were always and in every respect opposed to those held by the “Brethren.” All flowed from his fundamental error of making reason both the standard of truth and the power of apprehending it. So, again, the reference to the Quakers can only be from unacquaintance with the subject. For in every normal meeting of “Friends,” they have a bench of elders, and distinct and appointed ministers, among whom women figure not a little. Had Mr. Carey said, that there were a few points of coincidence between the old Waldenses and the “Brethren,” he would not have been so wide of the mark. The reader can judge by the following extract from Gieseler (vol. ii., pp. 376 and seq.) “Like Peter de Bruis and Henry, the Waldenses were free from all heresies of opinion, and sought only to restore an apostolic purity of practice. About the year 1170, their founder, Peter Waldensis of Lyons, with a number of followers (Pauperes de Lugduno, Sabatati) began to preach the gospel after the manner of the primitive apostles. So far were they at first from any intention of separating from the church, that having been forbidden

to preach by the Archbishop of Lyons, they applied to Pope Alexander III for permission (A.D. 1179). But having afterwards been excommunicated by Lucius III. (A.D. 1184), they thought it their duty to obey God rather than man, and separate from a church which prohibited that which they felt themselves called to do. At first they differed from the church only as to the exclusive right of the clergy to preach..... Even where their name was not openly adopted, the influence of their example is seen in the newly-awakened zeal of the people to read the Scriptures for themselves."

The fifth and last of these objections (42-44) is a return to the first starting-point — the Church of God defined as the assembly of saints, or those believed to be such, separate from the world: a definition, be it observed, which in substance was accepted from Mr. Dobrée, and which, we saw, agrees in the main with the Homilies against Mr. Carey. But evil is surmised here: the "saints" and "the world" are to him in a mist. I do not wonder at it. The system, of which he is a minister, confounds them in principle and forbids discrimination in practice. But why should the discerning of either be a difficulty to Christians, acting in the Spirit by the Word which insists on a "within" and a "without?" Little did the author think, in penning these remarks, that he was the unconscious witness of the errors of his own body and the hindrances therein to practising, or even understanding, the Scriptures about the saints and the world! As to "Brethren," however, he is quite mistaken. If a person has been for years known as a true and faithful disciple of the Lord, all they seek, or ought to seek, is adequate testimony; and for this they would accept the word of spiritual men, clerical or lay,

Anglican, Wesleyan, Congregational, Presbyterian, as really as from among themselves. If any teacher or ruler in the midst of “Brethren” spoke from personal knowledge, it would carry no more than the measure of the assembly’s confidence in his judgement and opportunities. Similar deference would be due and paid to testimony of equal weight from whatever quarter it might come. If an untried person, professing to be just converted to God, sought fellowship, the assembly is entitled to be satisfied as a whole, directly or indirectly, that Christ has received him, as the ground for their receiving him. As to deciding about “the world,” nothing is more simple to the believer who is not darkened and fettered by an evil human system: where Christ ends, the world begins. There may be the world, where there is much religiousness and orthodoxy.

To many it is repulsive to draw the line between the world and brethren in Christ. And some have not feared to indulge their dislike by denouncing it as despotic, inquisitional, disguised Popery, etc. Let me warn all such persons to beware of resisting and even insulting God’s will as revealed in His Word. Not only is it part of our Christian holiness to be thus united in separation from unbelievers, but there can be no full flow of Christian love, where that line is not practically drawn. For how can we love as brethren those whom we do not duly accept as brethren? In the family, all is gone if I do not know who are my near of kin: and the love which is interchanged on the ground of known relationships, could not rightly exist beyond them. So, spiritually, the notion that we are not to judge in this case, fair as it may sound to the speculative, is mere want of faith, which directly opposes our Father’s will, effaces the

bright badge of Christian discipleship, and destroys the very love which it falsely claims to spring from and represent. All the self-styled love, which is not founded on judging, according to Scripture, who are and who are not our brethren, is but sentiment, party-feeling, or cosmopolitanism, and not divine affection. We must know the brotherhood on sufficient grounds before we can love them as such.

The “Brethren” are only safe and sure, as long as they walk in the Spirit, subject to God’s Word: if those who are so called abandon the truth, let the true men purge themselves from such vessels to dishonour, as decidedly as from all others. “The foundation of God standeth sure.”

The Parable Of The Tares

remains to claim a few words. With this the Donatist controversy has been mixed up for party purposes. Now I have not the smallest sympathy with either of the combatants. They were both violent, they both resorted to finesse as well is force, they both invoked the civil authority to judge of an ecclesiastical question; and blood was shed intentionally on one side as well as the other. The “Brethren,” therefore, as to the main, are entirely apart from the Catholics and the Donatists alike; and so, I doubt not, would every intelligent godly Christian be, who may now talk about one or other without knowing the state of the case. But if it were allowed, which would be far from the truth, that the Catholics were thoroughly right and the Donatists thoroughly wrong as to all else, I must maintain, as the truth of God, that the application of the wheat-and-tare-field to the Church, and not to the kingdom, is false, and

even an express departure from the Lord's plain words. Had the Catholics admitted the true and divinely given sense of the parable, they would have been all the stronger spiritually, and might have been saved from much which disgraced their side of the quarrel. Nothing is more common in controversy than for a bad cause to derive a show of strength from an assertion of truth which the good cause has misunderstood. This would be true if none but Donatists had rightly discerned the parable. But the case is stronger. I had already stated that the greatest of the Greek ecclesiastical writers, (who had not the smallest sympathy with Donatists, any more than the "Brethren,") not only explains the parable as we do, but, what is better, gives the strongest scriptural reason for that meaning and no other. Was Chillingworth too a Donatist? Really I can hardly conceive a more petty artifice of controversy.

But Dean Trench convicts his own view of plain error. He not only assumes, as they all do, without proof, that the Church and the kingdom are one, but he says the field is the world, "because the Church is contemplated as ultimately embracing the whole world!!" (p. 16.) I answer that, in its own nature, as an elect body out of all nations, the Church NEVER can embrace the world. One error always leads to more, and a false interpretation clashes with other plain Scriptures. This is to confound the present time, when God is gathering out a people, with one wholly different, when all people, nations and languages shall serve Him, and the parable of the tares will not apply. For the harvest is the end of this age; the period of universal blessedness for the world is the new age (not yet the eternal state), when the Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of

His kingdom all scandals, and them which do iniquity. The mingled state is now; the world-kingdom of Christ (Rev. 11:15) will be another dispensation.

Those who raise or re-echo the cry of Donatists, do not know, probably, that the best of their forefathers had to bear the same reproach at the Reformation; as Owen and his friends had also at a later day. The pride and uncharitableness, not very humbly nor lovingly attributed to us now, were alleged against the Reformers when they seceded from what themselves had previously owned as "the Church Catholic." I defy these gentlemen to justify that great and righteous act of separation, if tares and wheat are bound to grow together in the visible Church. But the explanation is proved to be false by Mr. Carey's test — its inconsistency with other Scriptures (p. 49). For if, as they assume, without the least reason, the subject of the parable is church-fellowship, our Lord's word would preclude the separating a single wicked person under any circumstances. They might be incestuous, heretics, blasphemers, which are included in the tares of course; but "let both grow together till the harvest." The unholiness of the results, in the teeth of all Scripture which really speaks of church-communion and discipline, demonstrates that such an interpretation must be erroneous.

But Dr. Trench's notion is that "it needed not a special teaching to acquaint the disciples that in the world there would be a mixture of good and bad (p. 46)." Now every Jew who was not infidel looked for a state under the Messiah's reign here below, when His people shall be all righteous, and when the nation and kingdom that will not serve Zion shall perish. It was of deep moment,

therefore, that the disciples should learn, that now, while Christ is at God's right hand, the wholly different order of grace, not earthly righteousness (as in prophecy), takes effect, and tares must be left quietly to grow together in the world with the wheat, instead of being destroyed as they will be another day. James and John show the need then (Luke 9:54); and so does the history of Popery and even Protestantism since. Which of them has not employed, as long as they could, the pains and penalties at which Mr. Carey smiles? It was, however, a grim and cruel reality once and long; though the error would have been avoided by a due heed to this parable, which forbids the discipline of the Inquisition and the Dragonade, the discipline of the dungeon and the sword, of the fire and fagot. Was this not needed? Let those answer it who boast of being the lineal successors of priests, whose "acts of faith," bloody as the rites of Moloch, yet await the unsparing vengeance of God. Answer it, Oxford, Smithfield, — aye, Tower-hill! This, then, is the true import: the disciples in the kingdom of heaven were to exercise patient grace towards wicked professors, not judicial severity, which is reserved for the angels by and by. To apply the parable as the Dean of Westminster does, is wholly to miss this intended and most needed truth, to consecrate an error fraught with unholy consequences, and to silence the clear peremptory voice of the Holy Ghost in 1 Cor. 5, and elsewhere. In fact, too, the Donatists* seem to have been as deaf as the Catholics to the Lord's teaching in this parable, though they saw better what it does not teach. And as to applying Isa. 52:1 to "the Church," both parties were unite wrong, if the strict sense is adhered to; for the passage speaks of the future blessing of Jerusalem. If the principle only was meant, Gal. 4, which

applies Isa. 54 to the actual facts of Christianity, justifies the Donatists much more than their enemies. Certain it is, to my mind, that no great and good man more thoroughly lost his way than did Augustine in that controversy. Can people be aware that he who popularised the perversion of Matt. 13:30 to screen evil in the Church, argued on such Scriptures as Luke 14:23 (“compel them to come in”) etc. to warrant religious persecution? They had better retire from the slippery path, while there is yet time and a warning from God’s Word.

* If we are to believe Optatus, it was a mere quarrel begun by an angry turbulent lady, nourished by episcopal ambition, and strengthened by the avarice of those who had stolen the ecclesiastical treasures. And from a Donatist writer, quoted by Augustine, it seems that, except the point of baptism, there was really no difference worth naming between the contending parties. People who apply such a case to the present question betray great want of knowledge if not of conscience.

The truth is that the early Protestants, and the later Roundheads, were somewhat obnoxious to the charge of Donatism: not because they withdrew from a corrupt body which was not God’s Church, but because, as in Africa so in England, the separatists contended in carnal warfare with those they abandoned. Neither the old party nor the new scrupled to avail themselves of the world’s power, political intrigue, and even physical force to gain the upper hand: all of which things involve utter forgetfulness or rather ignorance of the prophetic parables. With “Brethren,” all has been and is different. We repudiate all rivalry, all reference to the civil power

about the things of God, and still more, all appeal in such matters to the arbitrament of the sword. We have ceased to do the evil, individual and corporate, of which we were consciously guilty; and we do not fear to trust God and the Word of His grace for the future. If we are now doing any thing wrong, we can heartily thank any one, be he Catholic or Donatist, who will show the error from Scripture;* for we, at any rate, are quite free and feel bound to correct all that may be amiss, and to follow the Lord more fully, being happily delivered from human systems where all is fixed by erring rules, and which ought to be left by those whose consciences judge them to be wrong. Mr. Carey considers the passing away of the Donatists to be full of warning; but it is lost, I fear, on those who believe them and their adversaries to have been almost equally mistaken. Still their disappearance was not wonderful after a merciless persecution, from about Dioclesian's close till the seventh century. If it proves anything, the argument goes much too far. True Christianity passed away from Rome in perhaps less time, unless Mr. Carey so regards the "abominable idolatry" (I speak with the Homilies) which, for more than a thousand years, has reigned there, and is but too vigorous still. Where is the Church of Corinth now? Where that of Philippi, of Antioch, etc.? Error is pertinacious enough and progressive too. It is the very consequence of the truth, that "Brethren " can only go right, as long as grace reigns in their midst; but this, according to Scripture, is sufficient for us: if it is not enough for our adversary, it is because his is a system of religious forms, so constructed as to look and sound well if there were no living power of the Spirit at work. As for "Brethren," their faults are great and manifold, and they do well to be humbled for them, because they are all

their own: for their position, they cannot be too thankful and confident, because it is of God; and those who speak evil of it, will remember their sin another day.

*Only let, it not be such a sample of misinterpretation as satisfies Mr. Carey on 2 Tim. 2: 21 (pp. 50, 51), who fortifies himself with an unintelligent quotation from Augustine. “Go ye out from thence” (Isa. 53:11) means from Babylon, not Jerusalem; and the present application would be departure from every such system of confusion. Equally unfounded is the remark on the “purging” which the Apostle enjoins, as a distinct thing from the inward, personal purity which he also urges in the verse that follows. Why confound these, but because the truth taught in verse 21 is unpalatable and involves bitter and costly consequences? But his objection to the only and obviously true sense is without an attempt at a reason. Is it not certain that “if a man purge himself from these” refers not to what follows but to what immediately preceded, that is, the vessels to dishonour in the great house? If so, what can purging himself “from these” mean but separation from ungodly professors? Exactly so Bengel “purgando sese, exierit de numero horum vasorum in dedecus;” and Dean Alford accepts the same view expressly. There was no need, in the Apostles’ days, for the true-hearted to “form themselves into a separate community,” because as yet they were able to purge the wicked out. But the principle is a large one and divinely provides for a time when the wicked might be too numerous and strong; and then if we cannot purge them out, we must purge ourselves from them, and follow the Christian path “with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

The Church of the Scriptures

Dear -,

I am really obliged by your sending me “the Church of the Scriptures,”1 which I have read with interest and attention. In much, though the ground and character differ widely, I agree, e.g., as to the unity of God’s Church, the error of mere detached and voluntary societies, and in some respects even as to the order which God set up, and in a certain sense as to perpetuity also. But the accompanying brief paper on the Anglican Establishment2 will explain some of the reasons which satisfy me that the institution, containing (I doubt not) many christian men and ministers, has no just claim to be considered the (or a) Church of God. The Athenaeum Club numbers in its ranks many members of both Houses, but it is not therefore the Parliament of the country. In fact, it was some of the principles contended for in the tract (especially that of the Church’s unity) which drove me out of the National Body and which hindered my joining any form or shade of Dissent: for I am profoundly convinced that Dissent can never afford an adequate resting-place to a spirit that is awakened to feel what the Church was intended to be.

One thing which struck me as unsatisfactory in the Tract is that it looks at England merely. This is too narrow a line for truth, and I am sorry to say that it is necessary to the writer’s reasonings. For the same arguments which move him to belong to the Anglican body in England, would lead him, if born in Russia, to be of the Greek communion, and in Italy to be of the Romish system. And yet these three bodies have no inter-

communion, but contrariwise oppose and anathematize each other. That is to say, the one visible Catholic Church of the author is a mere dream: it does not exist save on paper. The rivalry, the factions of the English, Romish, and Greek Churches in Jerusalem, for instance, (omitting all notice of Dissenting missionaries,) are the standing proof that the writer is, unintentionally, deluding himself and those who receive his statements. Each particular body has, of course, a unity of its own, but the Church of God, as a whole, has lost the unity on earth it once possessed — nay, the least semblance of it.

Some years ago it pleased the Lord to open my eyes in a little measure to the chaos and confusions of Christendom. To Rome I could not go, unless prepared, blindfold, to follow a tradition which nullifies the Word of God, and a systematic exclusion of the Holy Ghost from that action in the Church which Scripture describes in unmistakable terms. The Anglican communion was so evidently the mere religious system of a particular nation, and the prey of the secular power, that I soon felt it too absurd to attempt a serious defence of its constitution and condition. Strange as it may sound, it was Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity" which proved to me how indefensible my position therein was. But you must not therefore suppose that I in the least coincide with the puritan adversaries of that day, any more than with modern Dissenters. For while the Anglican body seems to me essentially at variance with Scripture in confounding the world and the Church together through a misuse of the sacraments and an almost entire disuse of discipline, (in the face of one of the homilies, which declares this last to be one of the three notes of a true Church,) I believe the Dissenters to

be fundamentally opposed to the New Testament in forming religious societies, some consisting of Christians only, some of a more mixed calibre, but all characterized by their points of difference and governed mostly by congregationally chosen presidents. These things, I am satisfied, contradict Holy Scripture, make man, not God, the founder of the Church and the disposer of ministry, destroying, of necessity, all practical manifestation of the “one body and one Spirit.” As to this I may be permitted to name one simple fact, which flows from these convictions, that I stand entirely aloof from those religious societies, platforms, etc., wherein evangelical Churchmen and Dissenters alike join. And I have ever experienced more bitterness and less sympathy from Baptists, Independents, Wesleyans, etc., than from godly Anglicans.

What, then, was to be done? What step was a Christian to take, who was assured that professing Christendom is in a state of rebellion? Not surely to return to that Romanisrn, which, as I believe, with the Homilies, is “drowned in abominable idolatries;” not surely to abide in a communion which permits a sceptical premier to destroy or erect bishoprics at will, and which is subject to the decisions of a privy council in matters of fundamental doctrine and discipline; not surely to join sects which abandon every just idea of God’s Church and reduce it, even if they were all Christians, to the principle and practice of mere human societies. Was the right course to remain an isolated individual, or to commence some new experiment? Nothing of the sort. All such procedure would be sin and the Christian is never compelled or at liberty to sin.

Suppose a family table deserted by all the sons and daughters. They abandon their father's house, or retire moodily and habitually to their own apartments, and they carelessly or capriciously choose their own company as they list. Two or three of the children begin to feel the dishonour done to their father: they return, confess their grievous wrong and humbly ask his leave (how gladly accorded!) to take their old place at his table. This is what, feeble and ignorant as I am, I have sought to do. As godly persons, slowly but at length, eschewed the Romish communion in the sixteenth century, because their abiding in that fellowship was really to continue in sin against God, on the same principle I am acting as to Protestantism no less than Popery. I am seeking, as God gives me light and grace, to take my stand on "the old paths" — the original and divine ground which God has never abandoned, which the Church, the professing body, has abandoned. In order, therefore, to get back to that ground, I must of course leave all that is contrary to it, confessing my own failure with all the rest. It is the guilty bodies (Rome, etc.) which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which we have learned. Such, therefore, I am commanded to avoid. From those who have the form of godliness but deny the power, whether individuals or associations, I am bound to turn away.

On the other hand, the Lord Himself has graciously made provision for those who fear to sanction what He hates by remaining in evil, and who fear to adopt a schismatic remedy. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." If I had only this word of the Lord Jesus, (Matt. 18:20) I trust that I should not be afraid to commit myself in

confiding faith, and I should be assured of His presence and blessing, during the present revolutionary condition of Christendom; but, I thank God, it is only one of the many words which His prescient grace has given for the guidance of the faithful in this dark and evil day. The analogy of Israel's history may illustrate the present duty of the Christian. I refer to what followed the breach of their national unity and the subsequent captivity even of Judah. Ezra and Nehemiah show us a little remnant returning to the land where the Lord's eye rested continually. Far more of their brethren remained behind in Babylon, and more still in the lands where the Assyrian conqueror had dispersed them. The shattered unity was never restored as a whole. A poor fraction from the two tribes came back, and infinitely less from the ton tribes. But the one question for those who valued the Lord and His promises to Israel was, What is the will of the Lord about His people? Israel had sinned and been smitten; but is the land still open? Is it open for us and our worship? They had not the ark with the cherubim of glory, nor Urim or Thummim. They had no Moses to smite their Gentile oppressors with the rod of power. There was no daily manna; there was no miraculous rock to slake their thirst with its unexpected streams. And what more despicable outwardly than this motley crowd of 42,360 persons with their menservants and maids? What more open to foreign scorn than that which they build? "If a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." Yet these, and these only of all Israel were in the place of obedience and full blessing. Therefore the Lord thus comforts them by Haggai: "My Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not." In spite of the captivity among the Gentiles, in spite of the dissolution of their own twelve-tribed unity long before, they still

held to the relationships, and responsibilities, and hopes of Israel. They sought to put away from themselves, privately and publicly, all that was inconsistent with that position. There was much to remind them of their past sins and of the humiliation which God had put upon them. “Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?” Nevertheless it was built in its due place at Jerusalem. It was furnished with the golden and silver vessels of God’s house, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried to Babylon. The object was the same and the principles the same. The commandments of the Lord their God, and His judgments, and His statutes were owned to be as binding as in the days of King David or of Moses. Circumstances were painfully changed, and the old men justly wept while lighter souls shouted for joy; (Ezra 3;) but it was as deeply resented as ever when the holy seed mingled themselves with the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. If any had taken strange wives, they gave their hands to put them away; and being guilty, they offered a ram of the flock for their trespass. Even if it were of long standing and they had children, still were they separated. Nay, the sin of Solomon was solemnly rehearsed as a warning, and the son-in-law of Sanballat found no shield for evil alliance in his near relationship to the high priest. The portion of the Levites was reviewed with care. The profanation of the Sabbath was stopped notwithstanding all gainsayers, high or low. In a word, great as was the distress and degradation, the law of God abode in all its force and integrity, and their obligations were not

relaxed. By that divine standard was their practice tested, no matter how long it existed or how venerable the names that sanctioned it. Far from pleading the weak and broken state of Israel as an excuse for carelessness, the lack of a priest with Urim and Thummim forced them to put away certain, as polluted, from the priesthood, because the register could not be found, i.e., they were compelled to unusual strictness, not laxity.

All this is eminently instructive for us of the heavenly calling. The Church, in her sphere, has suffered an eclipse no less than Israel. The Church has sinned grievously, has rejoiced in and worshipped the work of her own hands, and has gone, by the righteous judgment of God, into another Babylonish captivity. But thanks be unto God, the captives need remain no longer in the land of their bondage, The Holy Ghost has been working variously, and of late more than ever, to bring Christians back to the unchanging Scriptural basis of the Church of God — to own themselves and each other as members of one sole body, Christ's body, and to meet together as at the beginning, in the name of Christ, not in the name of the secular power, which is the degrading Erastianism of the Anglican body, nor in the name of the see of St. Peter, which is the plea of the Romish apostacy, nor in the name of a favourite teacher, dogma, or discipline, which embrace the different and conflicting forms of Dissent. THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS is the sole and sufficient centre of His own people. It is to us what Jerusalem's temple was to the Jew. It is the only name entitled to gather round it all the Church of God. All the members may not gather, for true loyalty of heart is weak, and the difficulties, prejudices, dangers, enemies

are many and strong. But the question is, not whether all the members of Christ are likely at cost of all to humble themselves for past lack of allegiance, and to let every association go which is contrary to the Lord's will for His Church, but whether I am ready to follow as He makes it known by His Word and Spirit. "Far above every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come," it is the name of Jesus which the Holy Ghost, sent down from heaven, delights to honour. "He shall glorify me: for He shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you." He is seeking to exalt neither Himself, nor much less the Church, but Christ the Lord. I bless the Lord that this which I believe to be God's principle for His Church is through grace mine, viz., the confession of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ as the divine gathering-point for the faithful, even as He is the only Saviour of sinners. The question is one of truth and not of numbers. The principles of God's Word must decide, and not popularity or the reverse. These remarks will explain in some measure how I differ from the tract as regards the actual condition of God's Church. The author writes as if things were substantially in their normal state, at least in our country. I maintain that the rent Christendom of our day proclaims the ruin-state of the Church. Can he deny it honestly? How is it we have the struggles of Romanists, Greeks, Anglicans, Syrians, Armenians, Nestorians, not to speak of the almost numberless sections of Protestants? How is it we read and hear of their solemn denunciations of each other, more especially in the larger systems, but not wanting in the least? I affirm that the Lord intended one communion all over the world, that He sanctions this and nothing else, and that, consequently, the Church of God universally has been unfaithful to her trust and

failed in her responsibility. For the Scriptural unity of the Church was not merely the coexistence of many independent bodies, as in the Churches of Rome, Greece, England, etc., even if they were ever so friendly, which they are not and cannot be, and if there were no dissenting communities rising up by their side among them. It was one body, animated and energized by the one Spirit of God — one body, not in theory only, but in practice here below. There were churches of Galatia and of Achaia, there were saints at Rome, there was the church in Jerusalem, in Antioch, in Ephesus; yet was there but one holy catholic church in reality on earth, so that if I were a member of one, I was a member of all, and if a minister at all, I was a minister everywhere. Whereas, in our day, if I belong to the Greek Church, I am therefore not a member of the Church of England, and if I were an English priest or bishop, I should be ipso facto not even a member and much less a clergyman of the Church of Rome. Thus, as regards the earth, (not the counsels of God,) the unity of the Church is gone, alas! as the early dew, and all is divided like our Lord's garments by the Roman soldiers, and the seamless vest is as it were again cast lots for, while meanwhile He Himself hangs exposed and dishonoured, with perhaps a few, feeble faithful ones looking on with tears afar off.

It is easy to extol and natural to justify whatever religious system we have been born and bred in; but this is the order of the flesh, not of the Spirit. Neither is it wise nor safe to take for granted or to evade so serious a question, the glory of the Lord being concerned in the matter. What I desire for myself and for God's people, if it please Him to give it the least weight in the hearts and

consciences of any, is, that we may feel more deeply the common sin of the Church, of that which here below bears the name of Christ, that we may confess it to God and to one another, and that we may cease from known evil through His grace, whatever may be the sacrifice. May we be kept from the common but unholy maxim of choosing the lesser of two evils, a procedure on which God never put His seal, and which faith never can accept.

My chief fault, therefore, with the tract, is, not that it goes too far in pleading for a return to “the Church of the Scriptures,” but that it does not go far enough in that most true and godly direction. The cause was obvious. The author was merely looking at the English Church so-called and English Dissenters. Now this is no, longer the question. God is raising grave enquiry among His children over the world — in England, France, Switzerland, Germany, nay, in Italy and Rome itself. It is no longer a question between the voluntary principle and an establishment, nor even between Protestantism and Popery, but between Christendom at large and the Word and Spirit of God. As the Lord called His own outside the camp of Judaism when the Jewish polity, unfaithful to its office, was about to be judged, so I am persuaded all the virgins, wise and foolish, have been slumbering and sleeping, and the midnight cry is now being made, “Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet HIM.” It is a time for earnest searchings of heart; for the time is short, and the lack of oil, of the unction of the Spirit, is fatal. But you will observe that the parable of the virgins (Matt. 25) teaches us the unfaithfulness of the whole professing body and the deeply interesting truth that they who have the oil leave

the quarters where they had been shamefully taking their repose and again go out to meet the Bridegroom; that is, just before the Bridegroom returns in glory, a return by the faithful to the original and only right principles of our calling is intimated.

It would be easy to take to pieces not a few of the statements and reasonings of the tract, particularly of that part which treats of the application of his test to the Anglican body. I must be forgiven if I think that his pre-occupied mind has betrayed him into mistakes of the most palpable kind. But my aim in this letter is not the negative process of exposing a tract or such like views, but rather to state the true question which I believe God to be now raising, and some of the Scriptural principles which must be appreciated and maintained in order to a right decision. Thus I am of opinion that the author's proofs of the visibility of the Anglican body in p. 303 form a marked contrast-I scarce know whether to style it grave or ludicrous, but assuredly a contrast — with the visibility of the Church of the Scriptures. As to the "Church of the Scriptures," the million did not recognize her. Her temples, if indeed she had anything but "upper chambers" or similar obscure places, did not grace the ancient cities, nor beautify their rural valleys, nor decorate their fertile hills: if any did then, they were heathen temples. "Parishes" were unknown and "priests" too, save as persecuting the Christians. There were no "prelates," and the "councils of the state" bound, burnt, or crucified those whom even the author would call such. The idea of "a ship's crew being supplied with a chaplain" would have been, in Apostolic days, as novel a phenomenon as the thing and term, "Church of England;" and the scheme of "nationalizing a

colony by a bishop" is a wonder reserved for our enlightened age. Not such was the visibility of "the Church of the Scriptures." The difference is in kind, and not in degree only.

The alleged unity of the Establishment finds its refutation in the discordant tongues of its own spiritual Babel. There is not even that measure of united action, discipline, or doctrine, within its pale, which pervades the various unsatisfactory forms of Dissent. The rival antagonistic and sometimes litigating factions, though in one common religious fraternity, are so notorious as to be a grave and public scandal in Christendom. Where shall I begin, where end in enumerating them? It is enough to name the High Church, Low Church, Broad Church, Tractarian and Evangelical parties, not to speak of a multitude who can scarcely be said to have any distinguishing principle whatever. Its catholicity, again, is contradicted by the very name (Church of England) it assumes. It has a system, more than a local sphere, peculiar to itself. Never in Scripture do we read of the Jerusalem Church at Rome, never of the Thessalonian Church at Colosse or anywhere else beyond Thessalonica. As to speaking of "the whole Church militant," "the Catholic Church," etc., in prayer, thanksgiving, or kindred exercises, the least sect might, and probably does, employ such language, no less than the greatest; but this is far from proving the universality of either. And what shall I say of the bold assertion that the Church of England is apostolical in her constitution and derivation, or that her perpetuity is apparent in her past history? Did the Reformation merely get rid of the Papal topstone, leaving the foundations and the edifice as a whole unchanged? Before that event, Popery had

prevailed in the land for near a thousand years. But then occurred a revolution so complete, that if it were an Apostolical Church during those ten centuries, it was assuredly not that Church afterwards; unless a body can give up its distinctive characteristics, yea, can adopt what it used to denounce as schism and heresy, and yet remain the same body still. In short, plain facts overthrow every pretension of the Establishment to be the Church, or consequently a Church, of God.

But I must now close this letter, hoping that I have neither wearied you with undue detail or prolixity, nor grieved you with uncalled-for plainness of speech. However you may regard my convictions, which I feel assured are founded on and according to the ever-living Word of God, believe me to be, dear -, Very sincerely yours, -.

1 London: G. Bell, 186, Fleet Street.

2 “Is the Anglican Establishment a Church of God?”

3 No person can plead in excuse for schism that the Church [i.e., the Establishment] is hidden. The million recognize her. Her temples grace our cities, beautify our rural valleys, and decorate our fertile hills. The inhabitants of every parish, whether rich or poor, find a home in her sanctuaries and realize the presence and offices of her priests. Her prelates sit in the councils of the state, her clergy sanctify the seats of learning, chasten our literature, and sustain the moral tone of society. Our ships’ crews are incomplete until supplied with a chaplain of the Church of England, nor are our colonies permanently nationalized without a bishop.” — (“The Church of the Scriptures,” etc., p. 30.)

On "The Church" in a Place, City, or Town

Letter 1.

Dear Brother,

As you desire to have in a plain and printed form for yourself and others what, in common with those we have regarded as most truly taught of God, I gather to be His revealed mind on this question, here it is.

The principle flows from the great and precious truth that we are called of God to walk on the ground of the “one body” of Christ. If we do not so walk, we cannot certainly be zealous to keep “the unity of the Spirit.”

If, as is often the case, the saints who in faith take this only divine stand, as gathered to Christ’s name, are only one company in a place, all is clear. No one among us questions their title or their competency any more than their responsibility. If they were but two or three, the privilege abides. They are not the assembly and do not pretend to be so, in the present ruin of the church, where many members of Christ are scattered everywhere in the religious societies, established or not, great or small. But they are bound none the less to walk together on that principle according to the Lord in the blessed Spirit who abides for ever, encouraged and sustained by that gracious resource for the evil day — the assurance of the Lord’s presence to validate their acts as truly as when the church stood as yet unbroken (Matt. 18:18-20). They might have to wait on Him as in weakness, and surely in humility and patience, and love, but in the confiding expectation of His guidance by His

word and Spirit. Impossible that the Lord could fail those who are thus gathered in dependence and faith. If will or haste work in leaders or led, there is no guarantee that mistake or even unrighteousness may not soon ensue to the sorrow and shame of all that love Him, and to the dishonour of His own name.

The question of unity is necessarily raised, not merely in a general way by the fact that Scripture recognises but “one body,” the church, all over the world, but in a practical way by its never speaking of assemblies, or churches, in a city or town. Of churches in a country or province we do read, but of “the church” in Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus or any other. Even dissensions or schisms within are strongly denounced; still more solemnly “heresies” or sects, as Scripture calls parties without. Unity must be kept, and is of the highest price, provided it be not carnal or worldly but “of the Spirit.” It is bound up with Christ’s name and glory, not to speak of its rich blessing spiritually for the mind and heart and conscience too of the saints who so walk.

Now the circumstances of the earliest saints thus called put unity to the test in a very manifest way. For by the unexampled power of the Holy Ghost thousands were brought to Christ’s name in a day, and in such a sort as to mark them out for the Lord beyond ordinary times, They could not, from the nature of the case, possess public buildings, even if they desired such means of congregating largely, indeed as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them rather, for distribution to such as had need. If they continued as yet in the temple, as being not quite delivered from their old associations, they broke bread at home — not “from house to house” as the Authorised Version says, so liable

to give the notion of slipshod disorder. Rooms were available, often “upper rooms,” of no inconsiderable size. But though they thus met, Jews now Christians from every nation under heaven, and doubtless they met in many different houses, the uniform language of the Holy Ghost is “the church” or assembly, never the assemblies. Indeed “the whole multitude” of the believers are expressly shown in Acts 6 to have found means of common action, though we are told ere this that the number of the men (ἀνδρῶν) came to be about five thousand. Is it too much to suppose that the believing women may have even then made it double?

I grant that the appointment of “the seven” was not an ordinary matter; and more extraordinary was the occasion which brought “all the multitude” together in Acts 15. I cite them as undeniable disclosures of that common action, by whatever means secured, of “the assembly” in a city, even when many thousands were concerned, which is the sanctioned practice of Scripture from the beginning.

Now if there be any duty which attaches to the assembly more inalienably than another, it is the reception, as we call it, or the exclusion, according to the word, of those who bear the Lord’s name. Is it by an assembly? or is it on the principle of “the” assembly? I speak not of a place where all the gathered saints are actually under one roof, but of a city or town where they are numerous enough, as in Jerusalem, to break bread in ever so many different houses. Scripture never recognises church action save in unity. 1 Cor. 5 is not for Corinth only, but for “all that call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, both theirs and ours.” I own and insist in the fullest way on local responsibility where the case

occurs and is known, but not to the practical denial of unity in the town or city. Action to be of God must be really, and not in mere form, unless we allow local infallibility, of all the saints gathered on divine ground. If all thus take part, it would be unrighteous to share the responsibility of action without an opportunity of conscientious acquiescence, and the consequent liberty to enquire or even duty to remonstrate in a godly way.

But the isolated action of some saints, or “an” assembly without the rest in one city or place, is practical independency, and wholly opposed to both spirit and letter of God’s word. In a province the assemblies here or there act each; and all saints prima facie accept the action of each. But there is from the nature of the case, according to the word, no common action. They are not “the assembly in Galatia,” but the assemblies of that country. It is never so in a town or city, where, if a local company have the responsibility of the case and of proposing the scriptural act, all the saints have the privilege and duty of joint action. Otherwise it is no longer the assembly in Jerusalem or in London, but a human sort of congregational union after the act, which is in this matter a denial of unity.

I say no more now than that I am as ever,

Yours affectionately in Christ,

To R. A. S. W. K.

Letter 2.

Dear Brother,

Objections of various kinds are made by those who more or less follow the traditions of Christendom. Under this head cannot be honestly classed the common action

which flows from the unity which is so urgently of the Holy Spirit everywhere in the New Testament, and here kept up by that remarkable phrase of Scripture, “the church in Jerusalem,” in Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, or any other. But reasons which even seem to be based on the word of God are entitled to a grave hearing. For Scripture must surely tally with Scripture, though one in no way pretends to solve, to the satisfaction of each objector, every difficulty that may be raised on this question or any other.

Thus it is argued that the church “at the house” (κατ᾽ ὁἶκον) of this or that person, of Aquila and Prisca, of Nymphas, of Philemon, is proof of “churches” in a city. Nay, rather is it, when duly weighed with other Scriptures, distinct disproof of any such divisive idea. It then becomes part of the evidence for unity; for, while no one denies “the church” in ever so many houses of a city, the saints there are notwithstanding invariably designated “the” assembly in (ἐν) the city. The notion of some Greek fathers, and of Calvin etc. since, that it means only a Christian household, strikes one as a mere evasion owing to their traditional prejudices. Neander, though right in the main, shows his inattention to the precision of Scripture by citing ἡ ἐκκλησία ἐν τῳ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ. Now it is never so written, though it might have been perhaps if all the saints had met in one house. The Spirit uses ἐυ only of all the saints in a city. It is always κατ᾽ οἶκον, absolutely as in Acts 2:46 (“at home”), or relatively as in the four houses we are now reviewing.

It will not be questioned by any fair and intelligent enquirer that the church in Ephesus, the metropolis of Asia, had been planted before the first epistle to the Corinthians was written thence. Evidently too “the

church at Aquila's" (1 Cor. 16:19) existed then in that city. "All the brethren greet you," in verse 20, supposes souls gathered elsewhere, and the main body too. The active grace of God gathers freely and in all simplicity; but as the Holy Spirit is one and impresses unity on all saints here below, so is there care in a place like Ephesus, not assuredly to hinder the gathering of saints to the Lord's name in more houses than one, but also to guard them all in unity. There may be the assembly here or the assembly there; but the aggregate of the saints in the place were "the assembly in Ephesus," never the assemblies in it or of it. Unity is the governing truth according to the will of our Lord, the Head of the church. So runs His word, which cannot be broken. To have them all meeting under one roof is an earthly notion: the presence and power of the Spirit rises wholly and essentially above diversity of place. Only it is indispensable that as Christ's body they be all gathered to His name in the liberty and unity of the Spirit.

From Rom. 16:3-5 it appears that Aquila and his wife were at Rome when the apostle wrote his great Epistle to the saints there from Corinth (A.D. 57 or 58); and here again we read of "the church at their house." It may be said doubtless that the saints in Rome are addressed as such throughout, and never in Scripture spoken of as the church in Rome. For my part I admire the perfectness of Scripture and the wisdom of God in so speaking. But it is at once a human and a weak inference that the saints were not the church of God there, because they are not so spoken of. Just consider those at Philippi or at Colosse, in which cities none would be so hardy as to deny them church character. Why then, it may be enquired, were the saints in those

places not styled “the church”? Not because they were not; for such a denial would be ridiculous where we hear as at Philippi, of bishops or overseers and deacons — a fulness of order which many true assemblies might not yet possess (see Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5). The truth taught in the Epistle to the Philippians brought individual experience and Christian life into relief, rather than ecclesiastical relationship; as the subject-matter in the Epistle to the Colossians is not the regulation of the church, but the recall of the saints to Christ the Head when in danger of losing the true sense of His glory. So even the Ephesian disciples are addressed as “the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus that are in Ephesus,” rather than as “the assembly” there, which last we are absolutely sure they were long before (Acts 20:17, 28). The reason is, that, though the church is handled in this Epistle from the highest point of view and in all the extent of its privileges, the utmost care is taken first and foremost to treat of the blessings of the saints in Christ, which leads to the individuality of their title in the address.

Yet more obvious is the key to the address in the Epistle to the Romans. It is due to its character as laying down, not church order, but the broad and deep foundations of divine righteousness in the gospel (with the guilt and evil of man that requires it), its consistency with the special promises to Israel, and the practical life of the Christian that flows from it, suits and is due to it. The spiritual mind feels that to address such an Epistle to “the church” in Rome would be out of harmony with the truth in question. For Paul, apostle by call, to address all that were in Rome saints by call seems to be perfection; not because they did not compose the assembly or

church there, but because the style adopted is in keeping, as “the assembly” would have been quite incongruous, with the drift of the Epistle. It would be indeed remarkable if the inspired apostle had written otherwise. That they were not the church in Rome is an unfounded deduction or strange doctrine. That there may have been several companies in that great city even then is in no way improbable: verses 14 and 15 seem to indicate groups; and there are, besides, many names recorded in the chapter, unconnected either with these verses or with 5, where we hear expressly of the assembly at the house of Prisc(ill)a and Aquila. Yet the analogy of Jerusalem, to speak of no other, would not only warrant but require the conclusion, that, whatever the number of companies meeting in Rome, all the saints in it formed the assembly there. Of course it was “the assembly” in this house, and “the assembly” in that; but the saints as a whole constituted “the assembly in Jerusalem,” Ephesus, Rome, etc., as the case might be. All stood on one divine ground; and it abides for us. Had there been “churches” in Jerusalem without common action, it would have been not “the” but “an” assembly here and another there, not unity but independency, the most opposed of all principles to that of God’s church.

Still more manifest and to the point is the evidence yielded by Col. 4:15, “Salute the brethren that are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the assembly that is at his (or, according to some of the more ancient copies, their) house.” It is in vain to assume that this was the only gathering of the saints in Laodicea. Properly viewed it would even of itself imply the contrary; for had this been the only company gathered to the Lord’s name in the city, it would have been naturally called the church “in

Laodicea" rather than "at Nymphas' house," (or according to the Vatican, etc., adopted by Lachmann, and by Westcott and Hort, Nympha's house). It might be argued of course that we are told in ver. 13 of "those that are in Laodicea," as if they were only so many individual saints not gathered at all. But there is really no room for such speculation; for in the next verse following (15) we read of "the assembly (or church) of Laodiceans," just as we might speak of the assembly of Londoners, meaning the assembly in London. "The" Laodiceans as in the Authorised and Revised Versions would be too much; and so with "the" Thessalonians in 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1. But the case is of moment, in that it shuts us up to a clear issue as to the unity of the church in a city, against the independency of the churches therein. The apostle does not at all identify the church at Nymphas' with the assembly of Laodiceans. Nor does he speak of the churches but of the church of Laodiceans, suggestive of common, not several, action.

Accordingly the "assembly of Laodiceans" expressly goes beyond those meeting at that house; while the unity of all the saints in Laodicea in no way hinders or denies the assembly at a certain saint's house. Does not this answer well to what has been so happily maintained among us hitherto, the unity of the saints in a city with local gatherings here or there in it? That they all met under one roof (save on extraordinary occasions), and that unity is only to be secured in this material way, is natural enough for those who do not believe in the unity of the Spirit; but it is really a crass idea and a delusion opposed to Scripture. Brethren may have assembled in this or that brother's house; but there was also the capital truth of the assembly "of Laodiceans" or "in

Laodicea" (Rev. 3:14, where the commonly received reading "of Laodiceans" rests only, as far as is known, on the Codex Reuchlini, which Erasmus used, out of some 110 MSS., 5 uncials and 105 cursives). Each meeting had no doubt its local responsibility: but none the less was there unity for all in the city. And who that knows what the church of God is could doubt that what appears in Col. 4:15, 16, was equally true everywhere else, if there were more meetings than one?

Philemon 2 remains for brief consideration, "the church, or assembly, at thy house." By comparison with Col. 4:9 and other corroborating evidence, it does not admit of doubt that Philemon's house was in Colosse. But it were an eccentric conclusion that this was the sole meeting of saints in the city. It was "the church at Philemon's house"; but it could not be, or it would have been called, the church in Colosse. Other gatherings, one or more, existed there. Here again, if we have proof of a local meeting and of course responsibility, we have not a word to weaken the unity of God's assembly in the city, but rather what distinctly implies it.

Thus every case of the church in a house fails as a solid objection, and rather tends to confirm by other connected facts (which the Holy Spirit carefully states as if to exclude independency), that unity along with local responsibility is of God, and to hold both is essential to all sound and spiritual conception of the church of God. One is far from referring to the late A. Neander as an accurate interpreter of God's mind, revealed in His word, on the constitution of the church. Still he honestly states, in general beyond others, what is found there, even if it condemn his own Lutheranism as well as the rest of Christendom. And thus, in the

“History of the Planting and Training of the Christian Church by the Apostles” (Book III. ch. iii, a chapter most damaging to traditional usages), he admits that while companies met in particular houses, without separating themselves from the whole, the “Epistles of the apostle Paul give the clearest evidence that all the Christians of one city originally formed one whole church.”

Another scripture has been cited with some confidence, not indeed to prove assemblies with independent action in a city, but to destroy the force of “the” assembly in a city by a citation meant to show its application to provinces. The insinuation therefore is that, if “the church” can be predicated of a province as of a city, the phrase cannot carry with it such unity as leads to common action in a city, because this is clearly out of the question in a province. But is it true that there is any single instance of such equivalence? Acts 9:31 is alleged, where the Authorised Version based on the received text says that “Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria,” etc.

Now it does not seem intelligent to plead in bar of this that the uncial MSS. E H L P with the great mass of cursives, two ancient versions, and some Greek and Latin fathers, oppose A B C and some dozen cursives, with most of the very ancient versions and several ecclesiastical writers. At least my judgment is that “the church,” as it has the best and oldest testimony, so also ought to be frankly accepted as the true reading. It was probably changed, by scribes who were struck with its peculiarity and did not understand its force, into conformity with Acts 16:5, where the plural is as right as here it seems weaker than the singular. “The, church, then, throughout (καθ with the genitive) the whole of

Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace," etc. It is a phrase wholly distinct from what is wanted by those who advocate separate action in a city; and hence it is absolutely worthless for their purpose. For it is a simple intimation that the church viewed as a whole, wherever it had extended throughout these lands, had peace.

Had the phrase been "the church (or assembly) of Judea and Galileo and Samaria," or "the church in Judea" etc., it might indeed have been lawfully used to neutralise the language on which so much stress is justly laid by those who for truth and practice cleave to the written word. As it stands, the marked difference of phrase destroys the wished-for application; while its unforced sense falls in exactly with the truth of the facts and the interpretation just now given. It is the church as far as it then existed there, the church throughout the designated lands, the church as a unity in this quarter; a sense which none of us questions elsewhere, and of the deepest moment to hold fast, though not the point at present in dispute. Only ignorance could cite it to weaken "the assembly" in a city or "the assemblies" of a province. Unity in the comprehensive sense is conceded on all hands.

I feel thankful for this little research into the wondrous word of God, the perfectness of which ever grows on the Christian who digs into it in faith. May we use its every word to the glory of the Lord Jesus in deed and in truth.

Yours affectionately in Him,

To R. A. S. W. K.

Letter 3.

Dear Brother, — In this communication I propose to set out as clearly as I can the evidence of Scripture on the

question whether the saints in a city were called to meet in the same room, in order thereby to maintain that unity, which in name is universally allowed in our midst, as it is in deed and truth asserted or assumed in the written word. There is a phrase of not uncommon occurrence in the New Testament, which has been supposed to imply the fact, and hence the duty, of the saints' assembling in one and the same company. Is this then the only scriptural way to express unity in a city?

Let us examine ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό in the Acts and the Epistles that we may gather whether the usage there necessitates the meeting in a single place for common action. On the face of the words no such restriction of meaning is taught; for their primitive or literal import is "for the same thing." Sameness of place is not expressed, but rather of object; though it is entirely allowed that the same purpose might be carried out in the same place, or at the same time, and this be implied contextually in the application of the phrase. Hence "together" is a legitimately derived signification, and indeed the most habitual sense in which it occurs in the New Testament. The nature of the case alone determines whether there was also the same time or place. Thus it is probable that it was in the same place when the Pharisees assembled "together" (ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό) to question the Lord (Matt. 22:34), as it could hardly be otherwise with two women grinding "together." But this we shall see might or might not be. The words in themselves do not settle it, but the circumstances or the context. The phrase itself therefore in no way shuts us up to one "place" in the physical sense. A moral force prevails generally, if not always save in bare outward facts.

The first instance is Acts 1:15, where the parenthesis informs us that there was a crowd of names “together” about a hundred and twenty. Now there is nothing here to hinder our supposing the 120 gathered into the same apartment; for that Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren was said just before, and immediately after we have his address. The natural inference is that they were all there to hear. But the true meaning of the words is a muster of names “together,” and not their being “gathered,” as the Revised Version puts it. — In the second occurrence, Acts 2:1, I see no reason to doubt that the disciples were assembled in the same place together. But here besides we find ὁμοῦ (the critical correction of ὁμοθυμαδόν, “with one accord,”) which is used properly of place, “at the same place,” though it too acquires the meaning of “together,” even where the notion of place is lost. The brethren were thus waiting for the promise of the Father, as the Lord had enjoined; and all the facts point to their being gathered in one place at this time, when they were baptised of the Spirit in the wondrous grace of God.

But the phrase occurs again in verse 44: “And all that believed were together and had all things common.” Now we know the sudden and immense spread of the truth even on that day alone. Are we to conceive they were all gathered into one room? The Spirit of God is describing their habitual life in unity, not here their assembling merely, as it would appear. It is in verse 42 that we find the general fact and formal principle, as verse 46 states the particulars, which lent a bright and blessed character even to their every-day life.1 In the close of verse 47 we have another and more conclusive disproof of a mere gathering under one roof to which

some would limit the phrase. It is well known that the true text of the last clause is: “And the Lord kept adding daily together those to be saved.” For want of understanding this, τῃ ἐκκλησίᾳ, “to the church,” crept in as an explanation; and ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό got relegated to the beginning of Acts 3. But, however taken, it is clear that the words do not mean “in the same place.” The Lord was adding His own “together,” quite apart from their being collected into “one place.” That they would assemble together as much as possible and enjoy the fellowship of saints is beyond controversy; but these were practical results of what the Lord was then doing in His grace. “For there is one body and one Spirit.” It is certain that the most solemn witness and sweet pledge of their fellowship as one, the breaking of bread, was not observed in one vast place capable of thousands participating, but κατ᾽ οἶκον “at home,” in contrast with the temple. They took the Lord’s supper in the houses of one and another of the saints. See again Acts 5:42, where a similar contrast re-appears, though here teaching and preaching are the point rather than the Lord’s Supper. They as yet had no public building suited to such a purpose, but just used their private houses throughout the city. Solomon’s porch might be excellent as long as it was available for speaking and testifying to the mass of Jews who frequented it as a sort of religious lounge and promenade; but it is as unfounded as ridiculous to suppose that all the saints could or would have met there for meetings of the assembly. It is certain therefore that the context refutes the idea that “together” here has anything to do with their assembling in one “place.” For if this had been sought, it must have been preeminently in the breaking of bread, and here we learn expressly that it was not so.

The fact is that the phrase is used adverbially in classical or ordinary Greek writers, just as we have seen in the New Testament, for “together.” Thus Thucydides, though not using it often, does thereby express (1. 79, vi. 106) concurrence in sentiment or in falsehood without reference to place. For other purposes he with marked precision employs εἰς τὸ αὐτό, ἐν τῳ αὐτῳ, κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ, ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ, κ. τ. λ. So Polybius (ii. 326) uses it for “together,” Dionys. Hal. (Ant. Rom. iii.), Cl. Ptol. (Geogr. i. 12), and Plutarch frequently, not to speak of other heathen authors.

But it is evidently to the Septuagint, Philo, and Josephus, we must look for more direct and sure illustration of New Testament phraseology; and there the formula occurs freely, and habitually for “together,” etc. Occasionally, of course, the place or time, may be the same; but, as in the New Testament, the usage is wider and often admits of difference in these respects where there is community of act or design. Compare Ex. 26:9, Ex. 36:13; Deut. 22:10; Deut. 25:5, 11; Joshua 9:2, Joshua 11:5; Judges 6:33, Judges 19:6; 2 Sam. 2:13, 2 Sam. 10:15, 2 Sam. 12:3, 2 Sam. 21:9; Ezra 4:3; Neh. 4:8, Neh. 6:2, 7; Ps. 2:2, Ps. 4:9, Ps. 18: (Heb. 19 and so in the following) 10, Ps. 33:3, Ps. 36:40, Ps. 40:7, Ps. 47:4, Ps. 48:2, 9, Ps. 54:15, Ps. 61:9, Ps. 70:11, Ps. 73:7, 9, Ps. 82:15, Ps. 101:23, Ps. 121:2, Ps. 132:1; Eccles. 11:6, Isa. 66:17; Jer. 3:18, Jer. 6:12, Jer. 46:12, 1. 4; Hosea 1:11; Amos 1:15, Amos 3:3; Micah 2:12. Comment on these occurrences of the Septuagint is needless. Though they will naturally be of chief interest to the student of the Greek Bible, it is hoped that the English reader may find the search not without profit; as it fully

confirms the fact that the phrase admits of sameness of purpose for several companies in as many places.

Here we might leave the question with its decisive answer from God's word; but it may help doubtful minds if we pursue it further. Acts 4:26 is the next example: "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together, ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό against the Lord and against His Christ." Of this we have the revealed application in the next verses: "for of a truth in this city against Thy holy Servant Jesus whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel foreordained to come to pass." Now it is very certain that this gathering ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό of Herod and of Pilate, of the Gentiles and of Israel, does not convey, or bear the inference that they were all assembled "in one place." Scripture declares that they were gathered "together," ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό. Yet Scripture expressly demonstrates, as every reader of the Gospels knows, that they met in quite different places. The chief priests and scribes led Christ to their own council, — indeed to Annas first and then to Caiaphas; the whole multitude of them led Him to Pilate and the Praetorium; then Pilate remitted Him to Herod; and finally Pilate chastised Him in his own place before the cross. The argument therefore founded on this phrase is a proved fallacy, and the deduction from it falls to the ground, as not only without reality but opposed to the sure teaching of Scripture.

1 Cor. 7:5 also clearly disproves "in one place," and shows that the regular union of married life is there meant. They might even be "in one place," when they were not ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό. In every way the notion is wrong.

Hence there is no solid reason for drawing more from 1 Cor. 11:20 than the Revisers say: “When therefore ye assemble yourselves together,” etc. This would be true if the saints in Corinth met in more buildings than one, though it is assuredly addressed to all the assembly in the city, and not to a part in one place.

Another passage which has been impressed for the service of the assumption that all met in a single place is 1 Cor. 14:23-25. But it seems surprising that any one should fail to see that the apostle is not describing facts as they were or ought to be, but only supposes a case where “the whole assembly” should meet “together” (ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό), and here by implication it would be in one place. If all were to speak with tongues, it would expose them to the charge of madness; if all were to prophesy, it would force, even on the unbeliever or simple man that came in, the conviction of God’s being indeed in or among them. But as we know expressly from 1 Cor. 12:29, 30, that “all” are not prophets, and do not speak with tongues, so this passage rightly understood would rather point to the conclusion that “the whole church” did not as a fact gather into a single place. Here only is it put, and this simply as an hypothesis to correct the unspirituality of the Corinthian saints in preferring the more showy sign-gifts to that really higher exercise of divine power which sets the soul morally in the presence of God under His grace and truth.

The same principle applies to 1 Cor. 5, save indeed that it is a weaker case. If the Corinthian assembly met in several houses, they none the less assembled themselves together, and none more than another put out from among themselves the wicked person. The church in

Jerusalem had unity as much as the church in Corinth; yet it is certain that they met in many houses to break bread. So therefore it may have been in Corinth without the least prejudice to their unity. The unity of the Spirit is a reality for principle and practice, and not a mere hope for heaven as independency makes it; but it is quite superior to the accidents of time and place. Is it seriously supposed that for putting away they temporarily abandoned the various places of meeting, and that all met in one building for such a purpose as this, whenever a case of church action occurred? Scripture gives no indication of such a thing for discipline, but shows breaking bread at home distributed over a city. We have already seen in Col. 4 the clear proof, on the one hand, of more than one meeting in Laodicea, and on the other of the unity of all the saints therein as the assembly of Laodiceans. Local responsibility is of the utmost practical value; but it must not be exercised so as to swamp the governing truth of unity in a city or town. And excision is unquestionably laid down in 1 Corinthians 5 as incumbent on the "assembly in Corinth," not merely on the church in somebody's house, which of course was (or might be) but part. The local brethren would naturally occupy themselves with the details, and this neither jealously nor suspected, if grace wrought; but on the assembly in the city, it is as certain from scripture as anything can be, falls the duty of approving themselves to be clear in the matter. The isolation. of the assembly in such a one's house from the assembly elsewhere in the town never occurs to the apostle's mind; and we must bear in mind that the Lord had "much people" in Corinth (Acts 18:10). It is the fruit of old habits or traditional error, strengthened by the growing self-will

of the day, and claiming “the voice of God” from passing circumstances, as clericalism does for its party work.

Mere notification after the act of excision, for example, in no way meets the word of God, but is quite consistent with the congregational system. Scripture requires that the assembly in the city should put away, and not the local meeting independently of the rest. To notify it to other saints not concerned in that solemn duty is a subordinate point, and not what scripture demands; but scripture is imperative that the assembly in the city, and not the local meeting only, should clear the Lord’s name. Of course, “the churches” of the province or country would in some way or another learn the fact and act on the decision, and so everywhere, unless unity were given up in every respect. But unity would be given up in a city, if the saints gathered therein to Christ’s name (whether meeting in one room or in ten) did not take part as a whole in putting away the wicked person. The independent action of the meeting in somebody’s house, where the offender might be, is not the injunction of the Holy Spirit, but his exclusion by all the gathered saints, as in Corinth. Plurality of meeting-places in a town does not change the divine principle, but makes the unity more impressive.

But here I must pause and remain, ever yours affectionately in Christ, W. K. To R. A. S.

P.S. — As some readers of Letter 2 in the last “Bible Treasury” think I had overlooked the fact of disciples in Damascus (Acts 9:19, 25), let them be assured that it is not so: the letter shows the contrary. But “disciples” do not necessarily mean “assembly” any more now than then. Even supposing however that the disciples in

Damascus or elsewhere were gathered and walked ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ, this would only modify some words quite independently of the argument, but not shake the great substantial fact pressed, that the phrase is altogether peculiar as expressive of another thought. It in no way weakens the difference between the assembly in a town and the assemblies of a country, which a false view of unity will always be found to confound or destroy. That marked and weighty difference is not more indelible in Scripture than bound up with the essential nature of God's assembly on earth; and every saint is responsible at least not to oppose and thwart the Lord's authority concerned in it, even if he be not intelligent enough to comprehend and appreciate it duly. I am quite content to leave the expression in Acts 9:13 as meaning no more than the assembly throughout these lands, i.e. the church thus limited; but the difference abides intact, even if the church were actually said, which it is not, to have then existed elsewhere.

Letter 4.

Dear Brother, — The principle then, on which within a given sphere church action according to scripture takes place, is the unity of the saints therein. It is the assembly (i.e. of all the gathered saints) in the city, which is commanded to put away from among themselves the wicked person 1 Cor. 5 is conclusive as to this, especially as confirmed by Col. 4:15, 16. In those early days to meet in private houses was even more common than in later times. The saints assembled, some here and some there, and the word notices this fact; but nowhere is there a hint of some in the city taking action and the rest not. Scripture, as we have seen is careful,

while owning the saints gathered in this or that private house, to speak of the assembly as a whole in the place, and to mark that on the assembly as a whole devolves the obligation to purge out the old leaven. Nobody dreams of a central weekly meeting doing any work of the sort; its business is to facilitate, in a wise and godly way, the common action of all the saints in the place. Whether the saints in Corinth met as a fact in one room or in several is not intimated, as it is quite immaterial in principle; and it might be hazardous to affirm one way or another. Doubtless this very silence is to be respected, and we can turn the Lord's command to so much the more ready and universal obedience, because there is no notice of that circumstantial difference. It is the assembly in Corinth, and equally, whether the saints congregated in several smaller rooms or in one large enough. But if the saints met in several, it was not the particular meeting where the incestuous man went most frequently, which alone acted in putting the defiled person out, but all the saints in Corinth. To the assembly therein, and not only to the portion of the saints who might be more immediately concerned with the details of the case, was the charge given. The assembly as a whole is that which Scripture shows to be called and bound of the Lord to act in His name.

Here again unbelief is at work as of old; and after ruining the practical testimony of Christ in the church, it denies that you can carry out this Scripture or any other about the assembly, because in this time of ruin there are but a few here and there gathered to His name. Ecclesiastically, it is the old enemy of despair. But Matt. 18:20 meets this objection fully and precisely. Before the church began, the grace and wisdom of Christ cut off all

real ground for it, giving the authority of His presence to that which is done even by “two or three” so gathered. What tender mercy, and provident care! But this only where the saints are gathered to His name. They have just the same ratification of heaven, as if all the saints were there; for even then what can compare with the Lord’s presence in their midst? And this He expressly declares to be no less assured to “two or three” if they are gathered to His name. To feel and own the ruin-state is of God; to enfeeble the word or its practical authority thereby is evil and of the enemy. It is not “display” that is wanted, or “organisation,” but obedience in faith without which all is vain.

Far be the thought that His presence is made good at the expense of His word, or to the dishonour of His Spirit. To be gathered unto His name is the condition of the promised blessing; but they are not so gathered who meet on any other principle than the one body of Christ. Thus is all truth bound together. There is no licence either to scatter the saints or to be indifferent about such a sin or its effects. Those who walk heedless of the one body on earth cannot be keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Since ever in London various gatherings existed, it has been the known and invariable practice for all the saints there to act simultaneously in matters of the assembly, both in receiving and in putting away. When a local meeting agreed to present a name for fellowship, it was carried to the central meeting on the Saturday evening, and, if no valid objection appeared, it was entered on the notice paper, and copied for each meeting in London. After a week’s delay for the satisfaction of all, if no godly reason held good to the contrary, the person was

received, the name being again and simultaneously before all. Until recently the cases for putting away were named but once; the effect of which was to afford insufficient opportunity of enquiry or objection even to the brethren at the Saturday meeting, and none whatever to the mass of saints in London, who must nevertheless take common part in the extreme act. This, being a plain and injurious anomaly, was at length rectified; and as all were to join in putting out, so all had due notice a clear week before excision, and so could with less hurry and more intelligence and equity take the action required. But, even before this becoming opportunity was afforded, no meeting ever assumed title to act apart from all the saints in London gathered to the Lord's name. The acknowledged principle was that all on the ground of God's church joined in the act. His assembly there, not a part of it without the others equally gathered to the Lord's name, was called of the Lord to vindicate His will. It is not a correction in detail, nor even an innovation merely, but another principle, as opposed to scriptural truth as it is to our practice hitherto, to claim for each local meeting in London competency to act, apart from all the other gathered saints, in receiving or excommunicating. If brethren were rash enough to allow so radical a change, it would be no less than revolution. To restrict the Lord's presence to the local meeting, where a plurality of gatherings exists in a place, is assuredly not faith in, or sound understanding of, Matt. 18 and 1 Cor. 5. It is equally and divinely true, whether there be in a place one meeting, or thirty; and all believe it is "when" and "where" the saints, whether two or three, or whether two or three thousand, are gathered together to His name. To set up independent church-action for each

local meeting, in a place where there are many, is to destroy the force of Scripture, which charges it on the assembly in the place, never on some but on all the saints gathered to Christ's name. It is to deny the assembly in a city, which is scriptural, and to imply assemblies of a city, which is unscriptural. It is independency, not unity, of man's will and contrary to God's word. "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 commandment of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant." 1 Cor. 14.

It is true that for many years there was looseness as to the circle embraced by the Saturday-evening meeting in London. The desire after help and fellowship blunted the perception of brethren to the fact that Croydon, Barking, Buckhurst Hill, etc., are in no sense included in London. Still all the gathered saints in London did act together; and this was the great matter, even if some outside acted with them, which was a work of supererogation. Better knowledge corrected this comparatively small anomaly; and it was very properly left to the exterior gatherings to take themselves off. Then came a painful procedure — arbitrary interference backed by party, contrary to express understanding, to coerce certain meetings in Kent, notwithstanding the conviction in some or all that they formed part of London as legitimately as Notting Hill, Finsbury Park, or Clapton. No intelligent brother doubts that there is a limit ecclesiastically to London, as to Rome, Ephesus, or any other place; and if will did not work, the saints would have no great difficulty in coming to a sound judgment.

Within it the saints gathered to the Lord are bound to act together, as they are equally in every other place according to Scripture.

Nor has any man of weight ever contended for either the weekly central meeting or the common paper as “the principle,” as some imagine. Not so. The joint action of the assembly in a place is the vital point; and this seems to necessitate, in the judgment of the wisest and most spiritual who have ever been with us, both that meeting and the papers. After years of reflection none has suggested a better means; nor has any suggestion been made which would not infringe on divine principle. One has proposed the communication of what each local meeting has done to London and elsewhere! another who admits London unity would relegate all to the central meeting, which would make a clergy and deny the assembly! So little do those who desire change agree, save in excluding the vital responsibility of that common action of the gathered saints which is due to Christ and imperatively claimed by His word.

But lo! another voice breaks on the ear from afar. One must make allowance for men accustomed to places where only one meeting exists. They are apt to err in venturing to speak in an off-hand way of such a place as London. One of these invented the sneer of “paper unity,” which others were not ashamed to echo. But what has this new voice to tell us? I do not wonder that the Editor of “Words of Faith” apologises, though mildly, for so fresh and bold a contradiction of the known judgment of their departed leader; nor that the writer claims “simply desire to edify!” by suggesting his rash thoughts, which will do nothing if they do not “raise questions.” For, without denying the breaking of bread

in various parts of a large city, counting many saints, as Rome, Jerusalem, etc., he insinuates that there was one place, marked out by the Lord, and recognised by all, as the centre or assembly! for all purposes of administration!! No more distressing assault was ever made by any one called a brother on the very nature, dignity, and responsibility of God's church; never greater though unconscious contempt — I say not for all we have hitherto learnt, confessed, valued, acted on, but — for God's revelation on a subject so precious to Christ. In the previous page he had gone so far as to speak of one place recognised as the gathering-place of the assembly, and all was connected with that, both for ministry!! and administration. God has taken care by Col. 4:16 to refute this mischievous nonsense founded on the misuse of ver. 15, and of other like cases.

Thus we are in presence of two efforts of Satan to damage or destroy. One is the radical form of independency, which would abuse local responsibility to overthrow the true unity of the church as a present reality, always binding on faith and practice, whatever the departure of Christendom. But next we have, not merely a party falling into independent action, inconsistent with their own confession of unity in their eager will to carry division, but one of their avowed converts, and of course loud and bitter advocates, essaying to justify the giving up of action to one place in a large city, "as the centre and assembly for all purposes of administration." If this be not the clerical form of independency, adulterating Scripture for its ambitious and evil aim, it will be hard to find it in Christendom. The organs either of dissent or Anglicanism have never propounded a more aspiring scheme to draw the saints,

and even whole gatherings out of their responsibility. What spirit can be at work to suggest such thoughts? Not the Holy Ghost.

It may surprise (as it should warn) some to learn that a line of argument similar to their own is adopted by Dr. S. Davidson (“Ecclesiastical Polity of the New Testament unfolded”), who went over to Independency from Presbyterianism. Not that one supposes the writers or speakers, for the separate action of each local assembly in a place where there are several, to have drawn their shafts from that quiver. It is a far more serious consideration, that it is the same root of unbelief as to the real unity of God’s church for present and practical action. The Congregational divine, with the same strange misuse of Solomon’s porch, equally urges that all were necessarily and literally together in one place, and equally deceives himself that the unity of the church consists with that human system. No wonder the imputation of independency is felt, which it would not be, if it were not the fact, though of course unconsciously. — Ever yours in Christ, To R. A. S. W. K.

Letter 5.

Dear Brother, — It may be helpful in more ways than one if we now test recent proceedings of the gravest consequence by that unity of action, which we have all hitherto professed, and which I believe to be the only scriptural principle, whatever the number of meetings in a place. Some seem by no means alive to the import of what is at stake. In places where brethren are used to but one meeting, they might easily go wrong if they judged from their own circumstances which do not raise the question; as others may err who have yielded to

feeling against that which touched them personally, or awakened their indignation. But truth is not learnt or kept thus.

In August 1879, the Park Street meeting shocked with a slight exception the spiritual intelligence and even the consciences of brethren generally by a Declaration sent out independently of the rest of the saints gathered in London. In that document they committed themselves to refusing fellowship, not only to a brother whose case was before another meeting, but to that meeting for what it agreed to do that very evening! and to all others, individuals or meetings, which did not clear themselves directly or indirectly from association with either the brother or the meeting in question!! They added that they disowned the present constitution of the weekly meeting as a medium of communication between the local meetings in London!!!

Now such an action as this taken in the Lord's name, even in itself (apart from the fundamental breach in sending it out as an assembly decision, without so much as seeking the acceptance of the saints gathered in London), was not only unheard of in our midst but opposed to what had uniformly been our bearing of old. It was not so as to Plymouth in 1845-6, though the evil there was beyond comparison worse than any thing alleged against the brother or meeting accused in London. It was not so after the Bethesda matter as to Bath, where a new meeting, outside that which had the previous sanction of G. V. W. etc., was begun with the sanction of J. N. D. etc. It was not so later still as to Jersey, whence saints from two meetings (till one collapsed), who had no intercommunion there, were allowed to break bread at the Priory, and so elsewhere,

with the consent of the same persons who in the Ramsgate case denounced a less fault as the destruction of the testimony, etc. It was not so as to Newton Abbot, where a party outside the then and still acknowledged assembly were sustained vehemently in word and deed by the same elder brother who from the first would have no less than the expulsion of his still more aged brother; yet was the offence very like his own. It was not so as to Christchurch (N.Z.), where G. V. W. had stood with the meeting on the one hand, and on the other J. N. D., after hearing two sisters, wrote his sympathy with their seceding friends; yet nobody thought of declaring him out, though surely responsible. Such cases, two of them recent, prove how contrary to all our habitual forbearance with godly brothers in conflicting circumstances were the proceedings of Park Street. They were due to a fierce party-spirit rising up to a not undesired crisis of division, as against brethren who could not consent to such extreme courses, believing them to be alien from Christ and Scripture.

But even if the aim of Park Street had been consistent, righteous, and godly, we are now to see how the hitherto constantly practised principle of the assembly's united action in a place bears on the recent acts, and so on all who accept them.

The Declaration of the 19th August 1879 was sent out in all directions by Park Street, as if it had been the sole gathering to the Lord's name in London. Can any intelligent believer deny that this was in direct violation of the principle we owned? It is in vain to plead the fault of Kennington or any other. The saints in Park Street were bound, if they claimed (as they did) assembly character, to have submitted their proposal to all the

gathered saints in London, even if they arrogated to themselves the sudden title to blot out with a stroke of their pen the intermediate weekly meeting, which no sober person could deem justifiable. It was really an act not only independent but revolutionary; unless it be assumed that the assembly even in a small corner of a city can do no wrong, or that the sin of independency is impossible among brethren because they do not call themselves Independents.

Never was a document from an assembly in fellowship so generally blamed and rejected as the Declaration of Park Street. Every one knows there were not a few nor inconsiderable circumstances tending to make anything emanating from that meeting acceptable to all brethren. Even from the least assembly a solemn act would on the face of it be received with the utmost respect. What then must have been the chagrin and amazement of the Park Street meeting, if they ever knew it from their present leaders, that (with scarce an exception beyond the not many daring and determined promoters of division, striving after “the reins” here and there) brethren throughout Great Britain, and Ireland, the Channel Islands, etc., not only rejected the judgment so peremptorily passed by Park Street, but hid away or destroyed the document, some even remonstrating with that meeting more severely than any other had ever experienced in our previous history!

Then followed before the close of August 1879 the notable second document from Park Street, dropping the Declaration, under the pressure of the same strong hand which forced the acceptance of the Kennington judgment on a most reluctant party. Yet it was that abandoned Declaration (in every way an error and an

object of censure and shame both in its intrinsic contents, and in sending it out so independently, that it did not even claim to emanate from the assembly in London), which was the occasion of the Guildford Hall agitation, and in effect, though dropped, the policy of the Park Street party.

Turn we now, from the sorrowful and humbling details that intervened, to April 1881, when Park Street made the letter from Guildford Hall the reason for judging the Ramsgate case. Let us forget if we can the strong bias in favour of the Guildford Hall leader and his company, who had fallen into the ditch through zeal for their Declaration, and stuck to it as of God when Park Street itself was compelled to give it up. Let us ignore even the private encouragement given by chiefs of the Park Street party to Guildford Hall in beginning for the third time that phase of the meeting which it was their known resolve to accredit as God's assembly in Ramsgate to the rejection of Abbot's Hill, and so get rid of all who could not accede to such harsh and partial measures. Let us assume that the Park Street meeting had neither prejudice nor prepossession, was without will or plan, without heat or underhand ways, but all simple and loving, righteous and holy, as suits the Lord's presence. Let us conceive adequate testimony heard and weighed without effort to sway the saints, and the total absence of influence or threat first or last from high quarters.

Supposing then all otherwise to be unimpeachable both before the meetings and during them, there stands before all the solemn fact of independency reappearing once more, and if possible more widely, deeply, and unanswerably. For Park Street took up the Ramsgate question after another local meeting (Hornsey Rise) had

gone into the matter and presumed to have the Lord's mind on one half at least (Abbot's Hill), though (strange to say) they did not broach the other half (Guildford Hall) for more than a month after.

What then can be thought of any one not only saying but printing, or allowing others to print, for the guidance of souls, that "it was forced upon them (Park Street), and they were obliged to go into it?" What is the meaning of London brethren circulating the statement that "the same thing might have happened at any other meeting in London or elsewhere, and we should have accepted their decision"? One may account perhaps for such words on the score of ignorance of the facts and the rash supposition of what was just the reverse; but what of those living in town or visiting (as many then did) to become conversant with what was going on, who know that all this is unfounded? They must be aware that our brother wrote under a delusion as to it all; and yet they allow positively false impressions to spread at home and abroad, without any effectual appeal to disabuse the writer's mind. Are Christian men fallen so low as to say not a word because such statements have been or may be useful in gaining the unwary? There are hundreds of his associates who must know that Hornsey Rise in part had judged the matter, as already explained. The statement evidently presents what ought to have been, not at all the fact as it was. If the case had been sound, vain repetition could not have ensued. When a matter is known to be judged as before God, no one thinks of reopening it. Bexley Heath, etc. were notoriously enthusiastic partisans of Guildford Hall. Nobody but enthusiasts heeded their judgment. What a sign of the state of the assembly then! Not even Hornsey Rise could

be satisfied, else they would have “accepted their decision,” instead of beginning judgment as they did and formally disowning Abbot’s Hill. This again did not satisfy; and therefore up rose Park Street which discussed Abbot’s Hill on April 21st and 28th, and Guildford Hall on May 3rd, deciding to refuse the one and receive the other.

But the extraordinary fact remains that not only did fruitless independent action mark the meeting in town or country that preceded the intervention of Park Street, but when Park Street did take it up, the same leaven of independency fatally betrayed its presence; for it was expressly given out that Park Street only acted for itself, and when its notice was with difficulty entered on the paper, it was said to be only binding on themselves, with information of this given to others! a thing absolutely unprecedented in our doings and sayings, again letting out the sad reality of independency. Now this was a subversion of the united action of God’s assembly. There was no proposal to the saints all over London, still less any acceptance by them when it becomes truly the judgment of the assembly in London. It was Park Street only acting for itself, and getting it on the paper solely as notifying that fact to the rest after it was done! Unity of action was no longer the rule.

The saints in London who espoused Guildford Hall were thus betaking themselves pro hac vice to independent devices. It was the sin of Park Street in 1879 reproducing itself more desperately, yea, irremediably for the present, in 1881. An independent act had been cleverly, but without real conscience work, got rid of in 1879; it reappeared with portentous virus in 1881, and it never ceased its activity till the poison was diffused

through all the meetings of that party in London. Think of thankfully accepting such a judgment as of God!

For so imaginatively incorrect is the picture, that not one local meeting throughout London simply accepted the Park Street decision. They each separately judged the matter, “resolving themselves into fragmentary independent meetings;” and each sent a separate decision in a way wholly unexampled to Cheapside for the notice paper.2 And so it has been in many assemblies throughout Great Britain and abroad. Independency supplanted unity save with brethren who could not follow Park Street in this open departure, adhering to the ground on which brethren have hitherto stood by grace. And none more zealously impressed on the country meetings the duty of a fresh and conscientious judgment for themselves than emissaries of Park Street or men who had attended the judicial meetings there (in direct antagonism to such as the writer of the Harrogate Letters, who fear to face the facts, paint the case as it should be, and call on the saints to do no more than “thankfully to accept the judgment of our Brethren gathered at Park Street).” Witness the shameful proceedings at Birmingham.

Every brother, however who in this serious trial cleaves to the truth as we have learnt and practised it, knows that according to the word a decision has no claim on the acceptance of the saints till it can be truly and in godly order the judgment of the assembly in a city, and not only in one part of it. He who employs Matt. 18 to justify independent action not only mistakes the Lord’s promise, but has already in heart abandoned the divine ground of God’s church for a unity which is only invisible, as Protestants generally make it.

The conduct of Park Street and of its followers among the other local meetings in London is the more strange, as the resort to independent action, though so aggravated and general, was simply in order to do this one business. As unity had ever prevailed before, so to unity they immediately returned, after employing independency to effect a purpose which, it is to be supposed, they despaired of accomplishing otherwise. Now I reject this playing fast and loose with a divine principle as unworthy of men of God. Is it not a plain undeniable warning for simple souls, unacquainted either with the details of Ryde and Ramsgate, of Kennington and Park Street, or with the rank and wild growth of party and personal feeling, which was the true source of the mischief and had long been seeking a plausible pretext for division? And I cherish the conviction that the mass of the saints, carried away by fear, favour, influence, companionship, and a crowd of other motives, do in their hearts detest as well as deplore this division; which stands in the most marked contrast with the separation from Bethesda etc., instead of having any analogy, as some have wantonly said.

Ever yours affectionately in Christ,

To R. A. S. W. K.

Letter 6.

Dear Brother, — When we come to the means of carrying out unity in a place, we must not be surprised that Scripture, though it knows no other principle, leaves open the means which must necessarily apply with some difference of form where the circumstances differ. How little is said as to the mode of receiving souls! Yet is this confessedly a most important question,

and sure to test the intelligence and heart of all who love the church of God, especially in the actual state of Christendom, and the sectarian habits of many saints. But notwithstanding endless variety in the circumstances, whether of individuals who present themselves, or of places large and small where meetings co-exist, there are landmarks of divine truth, which must be jealously maintained, if we would avoid the rocks of sectarianism or the shallows of independency.

In the case before us it is evident that the extremes of independency, clerical and radical, tight and lax, meet in the dislike of a central weekly meeting intended to promote the common action of the saints gathered to Christ's name, as in London. It is not only leading men who are restive if their views are challenged. Quite as impatient, or more so, are those who, conscious of feebleness, ever tend to strive after results by dint of private pressure and the combination which diligently excited prejudice forms. Thence they fear to submit their proposals to the conscientious hearing of other brethren, though these have just the same interests and responsibility as themselves. If we have no confidence save in our immediate circle, the bond is already broken. No wise or faithful soul can trust those who only trust themselves.

Without grace it is impossible that this meeting or any other could flourish. When brethren are in a good state, it will be, as it has been, a great blessing; if they fall into the manoeuvres or violence of party, it cannot but suffer greatly, but proportionately no more than any other meeting. If there be not love actively working and guided by the word of the. Lord, the local proposals are sure to be faulty, perhaps worse; if brothers from the

other meetings do not feel and act in the like subjection of grace, their suggestions can be of little worth, and may be mischievous. In both local and central meetings there are snares through unwatchfulness and other causes; as each if led of the Lord would contribute what the other might not so readily do to happy results. It is of all moment on the one hand that the exact knowledge of facts and persons which the local meetings should possess be fully appreciated; as on the other hand, if God has cast our lot where there are other meetings immediately concerned, the brethren are not to be envied who would forego the advantage of mature and close scrutiny that the decision be to the Lord's glory and the godly satisfaction of all who are called of Him to share it. He stands by His own order and is faithful to His promise. Were there but "two or three" in a place gathered to His name, they would in the sense of weakness wait the more on Him: but none the less would they count on His guidance and His full sanction. If they were two or three thousand, they would as truly need Him; but they would not slight His will that all saints in the city gathered to His name, whether in one or in twenty places, should carry out that will in unity according to His word. In order to do this not as a dead form but livingly, as all that concerns God's assembly is bound to be, suitable and sufficient means of knowing circumstances beforehand is requisite that they may act together, not in the dark but with holy intelligence.

A central weekly meeting is the only means as yet pointed out which ever commended itself widely to those who labour in the word and doctrine, or more generally to those who seek the edification and order of God's church. Other schemes have been proposed which

seldom obtained credit beyond the originator or at most a knot of his friends. They fail, when examined, because more than one would involve sacrifice of divine principle, reducing common action from a reality to show if not worse; or else it would introduce a machinery even slower, more cumbrous, and less satisfactory, than that which, whatever the defects, has well served the interests of Christ and His saints for so many years.

There is no need to say more of the openly independent way, which denies simultaneous action in a place where several meetings co-exist. Brethren in general are most decided against this ecclesiastical error. In ecclesiastical action to ignore other saints in the place, alike gathered to Christ's name, is to sin against the Lord and His word in foundation principles. Think of the apostle's indignation, if the church at Nymphas' had alone acted without securing the joint act of the assembly of Laodiceans! To obey the word of the Lord it was for the assembly in Corinth, and not merely for some of the saints in a particular quarter of the city, to put away from among themselves the wicked person. Only to notify the facts afterwards gives up the practical unity of the saints in a place, and is quite consistent with the most rigid independency, especially if care were taken to make it known without the city as well as within. Nobody objects to notification outside if the reality and scriptural breadth of common action be maintained. But such a making known is mere information and apart from the question.

It has been suggested, however, to send all names proposed for reception or exclusion to the weekly central meeting, without bringing them before the

gathered saints at the several meetings in the same city. But this, if a reality, would make the church unchurch itself, and invest the brothers' meeting with the authority which belongs only to the assembly having the Lord in the midst; and what could be more objectionable? It would thus supersede the church to constitute a clergy in the most dominant sense, if the brothers who met there, however wise or gracious, decided who should be received and who should be excluded. If they merely accepted without question the local proposals, where would be the value of such a meeting? For all in this case is really done independently; and there is not even the empty parade of notification to the saints at large, for it is to save this that the central announcement weekly to a few brothers is, supposed to take place. It is hard to conceive a plan more destructive of scriptural truth, whilst theoretically owing the unity of the saints in a city, and the advisability of a central meeting every week. We may dismiss this as (like its predecessor) a giving up of the duty of the gathered saints in a city to act in unity, but (unlike it) erecting a novel ecclesiastical tribunal, which if real would be a nuisance, and if unreal a nullity.

But next those who admit practical unity seek to meet or mitigate some objectors to the central meeting, by placing all the local meetings in direct communication, and acting in one without the intermediate meeting. How would this compromise work? Either as a show of unity without power, if there were no means of intermediate enquiry (and this it is the very design to extinguish); or if conscience were aroused by any self-evident irregularity, a dead-lock would be put on common action till a correspondence with the meeting

that proposed the questionable course led to some satisfactory conclusion. The other meetings meanwhile would be kept in painful suspense, till they knew that the proposal was either quashed or corrected, if not carried out in its primitive integrity. In all probability, too, what excited doubts in one meeting might awaken anxieties in others; and so there might arise several distinct lines of objection leading to correspondence, to the great trial of the assembly proposing the action. The general tendency would be to foreclose questions and induce acceptance of dubious measures, to the very possible dishonour of the Lord and lowering of spiritual judgment all round, because of dislike to give trouble or of unwillingness to appear officious.

And why all this tedious, vexatious, and unsatisfactory beating about the bush? It is not only within the means but the only well-proved practice of brethren, for competent men from the various meetings in a place to meet matters face to face. There a fuller explanation makes evident in general the right or the wrong of the proposal. If wrong either in the substance or in the form, how happy for the local meeting to have not an alteration by authority, but a suggestion for revisal! For, if wrongly decided, a matter becomes dangerous, as it is a sin and shame. Defects are always possible. If mere clerk brothers come, or (lower than this) messenger youths to bring a notice and fetch the paper, whose fault is this? Of course one earnestly desires the wisest brothers, one at least or more, from the respective meetings (without hindering any); so as not only to state circumstances when a question arises, but to give grave and holy counsel according to scripture, and thus to promote the fellowship and godly common walk of the

saints. Full blessing in any respect can only be where faith works by love; and in this central meeting wisdom and devotedness and humility are deeply called for.

It is quite a mistake that the central meeting necessitates any delay in reception or anything else. Thus, in places where there is but one meeting, it is usual to bring the name of one seeking fellowship before the brothers, whether at the close of the usual prayer-meeting or at a meeting appropriated to such matters, with adequate testimony of those who have visited the person. If no objection lie, the person is proposed on the following Lord's day and received on the next. The central meeting does not interpose one moment's delay; for it intervenes on the Friday or Saturday evening before the proposal to communicate the case to all the saints gathered to the Lord in the place, if there be ever so many meetings. If delay occur, it is (as the rule) in the particular meeting whence the proposal emanates, rarely if ever from others without the strongest reason which no upright conscience could despise, and therefore carrying general conviction as imperative.

Further, still less does the central meeting even seem to hinder the full and happy liberty of the saints at any particular meeting in according fellowship to such as desire to break bread if thoroughly commended as sound and godly, who may have no intention at the moment of severing their ties with their old associations (one does not speak of those that are heterodox). Such cases do not properly come within the range of the weekly meeting, which simply, as far as this is concerned, takes cognisance of those proposed for reception, and in no way interferes with such as may break bread passingly; a privilege which brethren

cannot deny without gainsaying their practice from the first and really changing divine principle. Nothing more clearly indicated beforehand the division now come than the unworthy evasion of duty in this respect, which was growing up for years, chiefly of course among those who compose the new party, but, one grieves to add, not confined to them. It was either narrowness of heart or unbelief, wherever it was found, and, I am thankful to say, to none more odious uniformly than to the late J. N. D., whatever may be the thoughts or ways of those who profess to follow him.

Although familiar with the London Saturday evening meeting for many years, I never saw the least sound reason to question its propriety and value. Mistakes not a few naturally occurred in its course; and just corrections also followed as to composition, character, and working. Even in its least happy condition no local meeting ever repudiated it; and never was it in a more satisfactory and harmonious state than just before the recent party movement which was wholly independent of it, though availing itself of all it could for its own ends, after the vain effort of Park Street against it. For years previously it never forgot its due relation to the assembly, usurping no function beyond its own and acting alike salutarily and without assumption, in aid both of the local meetings and of the saints as a whole, to glorify the Lord in unity, where so many occasions arise to perplex or dislocate, especially in an area of Christians so vast as that of London.

But even then jealousy, which in this division exceeded cruel wrath and outrageous anger, regarded with green eyes the desire to turn the weekly meeting to the best account. Local self-importance was wounded at finding

that the brethren from all other parts of London wished (not through suspicion but in love and fellowship) to know every case for reception or exclusion as truly as if arising in their own particular meeting. Thus unity of action became full of interest and vitality. Such as loved not unity but independency resented anything but a bare acceptance of names or notices. Hence they sought to ridicule any approach to a real acquaintance with each common matter, as if it were “a Methodist class for relating experience;” and they vented their dislike more undisguisedly and fatally on the willing ears of an honoured man abroad, that “certain people were having it all their own way at London bridge.” The sound or suspicion of such a thing was intolerable; and confirmatory gossip soon prepared the way for the final effort. But the Saturday evening meeting resisted it, and would have done so longer, but itself got swamped by reinforcements, not only from the firebrands of the town rarely seen there before, but from the heated partisans of the country, in support of an independent and divisive course, due much more after all to the local meetings than to the central meeting even at its worst.

No argument then seems weaker, or less worthy of believers, than laying such a catastrophe at the door of the Saturday evening meeting. Given all manner of destructive forces, with a match for the train, and the explosion is sure. The fact is that the local meetings were far more defenceless and sent the inflammable material into the central one, and thus made the rupture inevitable. The Saturday evening meeting stayed the mischief for a long while, instead of precipitating it. And if there should arise anywhere such spirits at work with a similar end, and animated with a like will, division

must ensue, with or without a central weekly meeting. An extraordinary crisis is no safe criterion: how did the meeting work habitually? I am satisfied that, for the ordinary walk of the saints with several meetings in a city, a central meeting, if duly supported from all parts, is of exceeding value for the godly solution of difficulties, with the least loss of time and the most effectual check on personal prejudice or local bias. If any can suggest a real correction on our past method truly and lovingly carried out, it will be welcome to none so much as those who feel that God guided in that meeting, and that the lack of it leaves a blank of great and real danger. Those who claim to go forward on the same divine ground as before can least afford to allow of change, natural as it is in a sect; and those who love and reverence the elder brethren who anticipated them in the path of Christ should beware of seeming even to their adversaries like a young and adventurous group of mariners at this time of day starting in quest of discoveries. By the grace of God I am one of those who dare not either retrograde or innovate, but would persevere, till Christ come, on the lines which I believe grace gave us to occupy for so many years, to the comfort and edification, the blessing and order, of the saints. — Ever yours affectionately in Christ, To R. A. S. W. K.

Letter 7.

Dear Brother, — Having now stated the principle (1), met the objections professedly based on Scripture (2), disposed of the theory of more local unity (3), shown that the ruin-state in no way affects our duty (4), applied it to recent proceedings in proof of its vital importance

(5), and examined every way one has heard suggested to carry out the principle, different from that which we have uniformly followed since the co-existence of several meetings in one place (6), I must now conclude with a few words of appeal to the conscience of brethren who object without giving a single ground of objection, solid or not. This is easy; is it wise, comely, or gracious?

Singular to say, these objectors are found among the nominal supporters of the Park Street test, which has laid the new ground of fellowship (however much some may seek to disguise or even deny it) for that confederacy. They cannot wholly agree with a central meeting: to their mind it savours of -ism. The principle of unity is divine; its consequent maintenance by a central meeting of brethren is another thing, and goes beyond Scripture. Such are their thoughts, and they are no more than thoughts. For what can be less true or even plausible than that a central meeting savours of -ism? In fact, all tradition in “the camp” stands opposed; and no christians wish for it, save those who believe in “one body and one Spirit.” It is well to own that unity is a divine principle;. it is better still to carry it out faithfully; and how is unity to be made good in practice, where there are several meetings in a place, without a central means to help it? Why do our objecting brethren preserve so obstinate a silence on this head? If they had the least light, surely love would lead them to impart it. With Acts 21:18 before me, I dare not say that a central meeting goes beyond Scripture. It looks like this at James’s.

But the fact, which strikes a simple mind forcibly, they cannot deny: they are themselves at this moment sanctioning a central meeting of their own — the very

one whose ways have brought discredit on the institution! Now if their company had accepted the Park Street Declaration, Cheapside clause and all, if they were really rejecting such a central meeting in London, Bristol, Edinburgh, or any other place where they had always carried it out before, we might give credit for present consistency, though lamenting their error, and believing it to be an unquestionable symptom of unsuspected independency, which with logical minds must work to “loose brethrenism,” or the religious world. No upright person can in peace continue, saying one thing and doing another. What we practise has a graver character than what we merely profess in words and practically deny. It is an evident and habitual compromise, which tends to sap ecclesiastical honesty, as dishonourable to the Lord as degrading to ourselves and our brethren, from whom we really differ while publicly appearing to agree on so important a matter. For it is surely all over with us and the Lord’s glory if we fail, not merely in spiritual apprehension and unworldly devotedness to Him and His own, but even in sincerity and truth, with which unleavened bread alone it is our bounden duty to keep the feast.

Yet I understand that abroad this unbelief prevails still more widely than at home, and that not a few brethren in France, Switzerland, Germany, etc., would thus evade the force of what has been in these pages and elsewhere pressed on their conscience. For they avow that they do not believe in the united action of the gathered saints in a city, and they consequently seek on this plea to justify the Park Street independent decision as a true assembly judgment!

It is hard to conceive that any accepted as guides, rulers or “chief men among the brethren” could be either so far behind in the truth, or so extraordinarily dull, as not to feel the self-condemnatory falseness of such a position. I do not speak of their presumption in thus openly contradicting the well-known convictions of those they always seemed to venerate when in the full and free and happy exercise of their spiritual judgment through a long life. Of whom is the judgment, if grounds be withheld, most entitled to respect? Of such as G. V. W., etc., who heartily and as before God stood by this meeting? or of those who in a crisis take up a dislike to it, and yet go on with it all the same? For its action is of course felt by and weighs with their adherents throughout the world.

But they too should learn, if they do not know, that the new confederacy which they espouse never now (any more than before the recent proceedings, even in the most ordinary question that concerns the saints) thinks of arrogating to Park Street, or to any other local meeting in London, the right of an assembly decision apart from all the other saints gathered to Christ’s name in this place. They still maintain as before (and, as I believe, so far, rightly) the obligation that all the gathered saints throughout the metropolis should act together, in order to judge with the authority of the Lord and His word: a unity impossible without the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; and only possible now for such saints as, gathered to Christ’s name, believe in His presence and look for His free action by the word in the assembly. Matt 18:20 does not treat of this unity, nor consequently in the least degree give it up; but it provides the great resource of grace for a day of ruin,

certainly not an excuse for disorder nor for setting aside other scriptures equally needful in their season.

Either then, as I believe, the recent proceedings were a plain and flagrant departure from the divine principle of unity to bring about the wished-for division; or, as these brethren believe, the common action in unity by means of the central meeting (which always ruled before the Park Street innovation, and which has ruled since as it does now) is a mere tradition of man; and therefore not only devoid of claim as of God on any conscience, but to be eschewed as a sin against the word and Spirit of God. Why then, as honest men, persevere in what they do not believe? Yet, by this arrangement, merely human in their eyes, all in London etc. is regulated, which concerns the weightiest interests of Christ's name, among those whom they regard as guided by the Holy Ghost on the ground of the one body of Christ! Where is their faith or fidelity?

From either point of view their ground is indefensible; but of the two the lowest morally is the latter. For what can be less worthy of respect than the idea that brethren in London were never ecclesiastically right save during the two short fits of independency we have noticed already? First, in 1879, those in Park Street issued the strange circular called the Declaration soon afterwards dropped on the plea that Kennington had acted. Secondly, and still worse in 1881, they took up the Ramsgate case to decide for themselves apart from all others in London, who as the general rule followed in due course, each meeting separately concluding on this matter! Thus it went forth, to be accepted on the responsibility of Park Street, or to be independently

judged, as the local authorities might prefer, all over the world!

The general character reported of the Park Street meetings, because many attended there from the rest of London as well as from the country, is utterly if not intentionally misleading, and chiefly due to female correspondence or to itinerant advocates of the party. They were expressly for Park Street alone, to decide for themselves, whoever might be present. Park Street accordingly cannot claim the force or name of an assembly judgment, unless brethren give up unity and sink into congregationalism. The whole affair was a disastrous blunder, fraught with bitter and humbling results; which none but “men speaking perverse things” would wish to be permanent, in order to draw away the disciples after them.

For my part I believe that brethren in London as elsewhere were guided by God during the past in maintaining unity as they have ever done, not as a lifeless theory but as a living practice, and by means of a central meeting where several co-existing meetings recognised it. And were this abandoned deliberately for independent meetings in the same place, I should feel as deliberately bound to abandon those who must be regarded by me as distinctly unfaithful to their trust, and no longer in heart gathered to Christ’s name in unity; a mere aggregate of christian societies, and no more saints assembled on the ground of God’s church in the place. To this by grace I adhere, assured that this alone is according to the word of God, and that the Holy Spirit is here to give it efficacy for Christ’s glory in a true sphere, however circumscribed through the unbelief of Christendom and, not least of all, our own

fault. But sense of failure is only the more urgent a call for all who fear God to cleave to Christ and the truth in dependence on His grace.

Ever yours affectionately in Him,

To R. A. S. W. K.

W. Walters. Printer & Publisher, 26, Islington Row, Birmingham.

1 Since writing this letter I have lit on the following note on the verse in the pious and learned Dr. John Lightfoot's Works (Pitman's edition, viii. 61); "This Greek word ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό is of frequent and of various use in the Septuagint. It sometimes betokens the meeting of persons in the same company; so of beasts: sometimes their concurring in the same action, though not in the same company or place; sometimes their concurring in the same condition, and sometimes their knitting together, though in several companies; — As Joab's and Abner's men, though they sat at a distance, and the pool of Gibeon between them, yet they said συναντᾳν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό. And in this sense is the word to be understood in this story; for it is past all imagination or conceiving, that all those thousands of believers, that were now in Jerusalem, should keep all of one company and knot, and not part asunder; for what house would hold them? But they kept in several companies or congregations, according as their languages, nations, or other references, did knot them together. And this joining together, because it was apart from those that believed not, and because it was in the same profession, and practice of the duties of religion; therefore it is said to be ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό, though it were in several companies or congregations." I have omitted the author's references,

as they of course appear included in the much fuller list from the Septuagint, which is given elsewhere in this letter.

2 North Row, 15th May; Notting Hill, 22nd do; Battersea, do; Hoxton, do.; Stoke Newington, 5th June; Old Kent Road, 19th, do.; Westbourne Park, 10th July; Poplar, 27th do.; Clapton, 14th Aug.; Goswell Road, 28th do. Parts of meetings need not be noticed.

The Church, and the Churches

A tract has been sent me of a departed Christian (A. J. Holiday), which it is far from my wish to criticise. As I told his friends who desired a judgment, though I should greatly prefer their judging his doctrine by God's word, I do not refuse to help as far as I am enabled.

Two points in particular seem to be the great aim: the necessity for the Christian, the member of Christ's body, to join himself to a company of disciples, a local assembly or church; and the oversight of elders as the necessary means of the due keeping of the flock.

No sober Christian doubts that in no long time after Pentecost there were local assemblies, not only in Judea and Galilee and Samaria, but among the Gentiles east and west, north and south. And the members of Christ from one local assembly were received in any other, only their identification needing letters commendatory. But all was grounded on their accredited relation to Christ as of His body. This was the foundation on which they originally had their place. Their brethren received them, because there was adequate testimony to their consciences and hearts that the Lord had been adding them together (ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ) (Acts 2:47). He was building up His church; and these were living stones, members of the one body, even if the phrase "the church" only first occurs in Acts 5:11. None did then pretend to any other membership. Others too bowed to Him only, even when all the twelve were there to rule with apostolic authority.

There are two divinely appointed symbols, which mark, one the individual Christian, the other the fellowship of

the body the Church as in due time was clearly explained in 1 Cor. 10.

Both necessarily take place locally; but both are based on Christ the Lord. The baptism is not to the local representative but to Christ the Lord; and if we seek the details of the formula, “unto the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Just so with the church symbol; it is the communion of the body of Christ, not of any local body, though observed locally; “because we, the many, are one loaf, one body; for we, the whole of us, partake of the one loaf.” There is no word or thought here or in any other scriptures to countenance a local source. The word of God speaks of no membership save of Christ’s own body; just as not a word admits of any Headship of the church but His exclusively. The same act of divine grace which makes us members of Christ makes us also members one of another. Any other membership is human tradition, which, as the Lord taught and we may readily verify, never fails to make void the word, though men may think it a good, wise, and needed supplement.

Membership of a church is the vast error of Christendom. Rome, I presume, was mother of it, as of so much else incompatible with the truth of the church as God has revealed, though its Greek rival was no less keen for the same special membership: a thing totally unknown to the apostolic day when all the Christians on earth enjoyed but one communion. Hence when the apostle would correct local evils in one place, he wrote “to the church of God that is in Corinth, sanctified [ones] in Christ Jesus, saints called [or, by call], with all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours:” a remarkable and emphatic guard

against the principle of ecclesiastical independency. With this agree his words against schisms in 1 Cor. 1; “everywhere in every assembly,” 1 Cor. 4; his call to judge those “within” (not a but the church), as the “without” was everywhere also; his words “thus I ordain in all the assemblies” in 1 Cor. 7. Compare also 1 Cor. 14:33-37.

The Reformation, though a blessed work for delivering from Rome’s servitude, and giving back the Bible in our mother-tongue frankly, in no due way attested the church, but fell back on the State to resist the Papacy, and Babylon the corruption of the church, and the denial of its Head. As this was clearly unscriptural, the system of accredited sects followed to our day, the ignoring and negation of the one body on earth united to its heavenly Head by the Spirit’s baptism (1 Cor. 12:13)

So also the apostle teaches in the same chapter that there are distinctions of operations, but the same God that operates all things in all; that to each the manifestation of the Spirit is given for profit, and that whatever the different kinds, the one and the same Spirit operates all these, dividing to each in particular as He pleases. “For even as the body is one and hath many members, but all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ. For also in the power of [or by] one Spirit we all were baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free, and were all given to drink of one Spirit.” People talk of Christ’s mystical body where the scripture account does not apply to present practice. But it is plain as words can make it, that here is given the principle and way of the Spirit’s action in the body on earth, not for heaven or a future time. Only unbelief can argue that it is obsolete,

and not obligatory so far as God deigns to give power in the present scattered state of the saints so lacking in faith, undevoted, and worldly-minded. Further, we are told that as the case is, “God set the members each one of them in the body even as it pleased Him,” surely not in a mere local body but rather in the body as a whole. Ver. 27 in no way weakens this truth, but applies it to the Corinthian saints as its local representative, to enforce their responsibility according to privilege, the very reverse of claiming independency. Again, he says, “God set certain in the church, firstly apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then powers” [or miracles], etc., putting lower down what carnal levity at Corinth raised to the highest. But without doubt all this energy of the Spirit was in the church now and here; and there remains in divine faithfulness all that is for His glory and our need in the day when the church was stripped of her ornaments.

Eph. 4 gives us the selfsame principle, not as a contrast of the one Spirit with the many instruments of Satan’s evil work, but in view of Christ’s glory on high and love to His body the church on earth. There too apostles and prophets share the first and the second rank; but we have also the evangelists to gather to Christ out of the world, and the pastors (or, shepherds) and teachers to tend and instruct the saints for their perfecting, unto ministerial work, unto edifying of His body. This was on earth, though for heaven where such working never was nor will be, but in His body here; and it was then the body visible, as the saints were responsible to continue. If it too soon became invisible, it was the church’s sin in departure from its place as Christ’s one body, its

privileges, worship, walk, and ways in general, through unfaithfulness to God.

Is, or is not, the church responsible by grace to maintain this position, not merely “endeavouring” but giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit? Internal divisions (σχίσματα) practically opposed and misrepresented that unity; “sects” (αἱρέσεις) or external splits of self-will were its open denial in principle. If we believe in the one body of Christ as the spiritual fact on the earth, we are bound to judge its anomalous state since the apostles departed, as an ever-increasing offence against grace and truth, judging as the Head does by the word, and humbling ourselves. So holy Daniel did for the similar departure of Israel, instead of pleading God’s providence and excusing the change. If we are taught by God of the church’s unity on earth, bound up with Christ’s love and honour, the present ruin is felt as deep shame and sorrow; and all the more, because of the Holy Spirit sent forth, not only to form but to sustain this divine unity in the saints, as He surely would, if they had not allowed the flesh and the world to darken and turn aside and set up other unities incompatible with that of the Spirit, which can only be in faith, love, and holiness according to God’s word.

Now one of the first, and widest, subtlest and most permanent contributing causes is the assertion of a local church membership, or of the largest possible federation of churches, in opposition to the only membership known to scripture, the membership of Christ by the gift and sealing of the Holy Spirit. For it is not the new birth or faith in Christ (however essential preliminarily) which constitutes one a member of His body, but the gift of the Spirit. Compare Acts 1:4, 5; Acts 2:38; Acts 11:16, 17; 1

Cor. 12:13. At Pentecost it began; and so according to scripture the Spirit abides, as for other ends, to effectuate the one body of Christ now on earth, not a mere mystical union on high, any more than membership of a church on earth. If the unity had been mystical only, the scattered children of God needed not to be gathered together into one. It was to be here and now since Pentecost, not for heaven only where was no difficulty or danger, “a unity” as the tract says “which none can ever break.” Here it was to be as a testimony “that the world might believe” (John 17:21), excluding Augustine’s invention of an invisible church, though it will only be “perfected into one” in the day of displayed glory “that the world may know” (vers. 22, 23).

Of this unity, whether of God’s family as with John, or of Christ’s body as with Paul, the Christian forms part. The Lord adds each to the church; and the church is bound to His act when ascertained suitably; but there was no thought of the believer being brought into its assembly “by his own act and the act of the assembly also.” It was an act of God’s supreme grace, above man’s acts, though faith owned it in all concerned. A supplemental or sectional member is not only unscriptural but anti-scriptural, the parent error of no end of errors, and leading ultimately to congregationalism or independent churches, the antitheses of God’s church here as Christ’s one body.

On the other hand, the remedy of professing to be the church of God now, in the departed and broken state of Christendom is in principle as bad as the disease, a mere and false pretension. For in fact the members are here, there, and anywhere. Yea even if all the Christians in a given place were to re-assemble, they would belie

the truth in claiming to be “the” church of God, while there is scattering over all the earth. But they are bound to give up every false unity, yet through mercy free to meet on the one divine principle, gathered to Christ’s name its ever true centre, and having Him in their midst, were they but two or three, as the Lord anticipated in Matt. 18:20, and the Holy Spirit enjoins in 2 Tim. 2:19-22. It is the resource for those faithful to the Lord in the difficult times of last days.

Let us see the effect of this membership of a church, not in the Babel of sects great and small, but upon one so earnest and confident of his fidelity to scripture as Mr. H., shared by his associates now as from their beginning. “Joining oneself to a company of disciples called a church” is unknown to God’s word, and purely human. He connects responsibility with this false membership, because man has to do with it, instead of the far deeper responsibility of our relationship to God and His Son, all the more as it was sovereign grace in its highest form. Now it is vain to talk about grace, if we offend against immutable morality. But even if fairly right here, scripture insists on what is due from us according to the grace given and our new relationship both as Christians and in the church of God as a whole. Nothing is more ruinous than to overlook or enfeeble our responsibility in this large and lofty respect, because the privileges are so transcendent.

Take his treatment of Matt. 18 (pp. 10-12). The action is in a local assembly, but it, if done in obedience, is not a binding or loosing there only: heaven itself sanctions this issue. Could any thought or word lift it more above mere locality? Yet the utmost violence is offered to dislocate the context in ver. 19 into a parenthesis,

instead of the plain and sure fact that the Lord welds together, not only discipline but prayer, under the comprehensive assurance of His presence in the midst of but “two or three” if gathered together unto His name. The prayer of the agreeing has this invaluable privilege as truly as the rest, but even this is frittered away into individuality. When he says that “two of you” is the same word (or, construction) as in 7:9, and can only be fully expressed by “from among,” he is directly opposed to the truth; for this depends on ἐκ in the earlier chapter, which is wholly wanting in the later text. Either he did not consult the Greek Testament or he was quite ignorant of the language. Certainly the statement is inexcusably wrong.

In 1 Cor. 12:27 “body of Christ” means Christ’s body representatively, but not separately from the church, just answering to the opening words of chap 1 and demolishing the error of an independent assembly (p. 13).

The true rendering in Acts 20:28 is also important, not “over which” but “wherein” or “in which,” a quite different sense.

A perversion of the true text in Acts 9:31 (p. 32) is due to the impossibility of squaring a local church membership with scripture, “the church throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria.” This he makes out to be “the Church of Jerusalem!” preserving its local character even when scattered far away. But it is also quite an error that joining himself to the disciples in Jerusalem was Saul’s wish to “join a church.” They did not yet know that he was “a disciple.” It was simply that Barnabas removed a false impression.

The church was God's organisation and prevailed everywhere in apostolic days. Churches afterwards organised in opposition to Him and to each other. Those who cleave to God's way eschew man's, instead of "forming a federation," as with some who do not believe in the one body here below, any departure from which is independency.

It is true however that the anomalous state of Christ's members leads too often to anomalies of expression. The welcome, as things are, of a godly believer to partake of the Lord's Supper (the special sign of church fellowship) involves the discipline proper to God's house, and should not be extended to any who opposed the teaching or fellowship of the apostles, simple as it was at Pentecost, or the prayers. The rules afterwards added, when faith was no longer living in the Holy Spirit's presence and free action in the assembly, and in ministry, were as unknown as joining a church. Further, it is quite true that "putting out" in scripture means removing the wicked person not only from the Lord's Table or Supper but "from among yourselves," and this because they were Christ's representatively, and valid as done in His name, wherever the church existed.

The last of these wrestings of scripture at which we look, flowing from the error of reception into a church, is the misuse of 1 Tim. 3:14, 15 (pp. 46, 47). It seems incredible that any simple-hearted Christian could construe such words of the apostle into the narrow circle of a local assembly. The absence of the article on which he relies in no way warrants such an inference, but is required being a predicate, though applied to the church wherever it may be. No one questions that every true assembly represents it locally. But here the church

is viewed in its unity as a whole, and the exhortation applies to Ephesus no more than to any other place, subject to and witnessing the revelation of God. Narrowing such words to a local assembly is the natural result of being carried away by a human idea which has no countenance in scripture, and is occupied with its own little sphere, instead of reading our obligations in all the light and height and breadth of God's mind.

But we must also point out the effect of the same system as to Elders or overseers. Now the apostles had a function of authority specially attached to their position as we can see in both the Acts and the Epistles. They could locally appoint, not only deacons for outward service, but elders in a particular church or city. See Acts 6:3, Acts 14:23. They were competent to act indirectly by a delegate, where they could not themselves go, as we see in Titus 1:5. Never was this left to the church; nor could any one undertake the task save as definitely prescribed by an apostle. Hence the marked difference between "the gifts" for exercise in the body of Christ, wherever it might be, and those local charges, which required to be established by an apostle or his delegates for the occasion. As neither did or could go everywhere, scripture provides an invaluable resource for days in which we have neither apostle nor his definitely commissioned delegate; Rom. 12:8, 9; 1 Cor. 16:15, 16; 1 Thess. 5:12, 13; Heb. 13:17. These were not said to be elders; but they were important men who had qualities fitting for eldership; and they were to be obeyed, and highly esteemed for their work's sake. This fully applies when there exists not the legitimate authority to nominate officially, as soon and now.

But unbelief is perverse, and calls for elders when their full title fails, while it dishonours gifts which the grace of the Lord does not fail to give. All true ministry is the exercise of gift. But as the truth of the church's unity on earth is no less lost and denied, we cannot wonder that so it is as to both gifts and elders. Mr. H. assumes eldership like the rest of Christendom where all is confusion, with the utmost pretension of being rich and having need of nothing, where it is wrecked as a living witness even of grace and truth, as well as of unity and order, as He set it up. Nor could any Christian show his lack of discernment more than this tract exposes in p. 7, that while most believers of intelligence know what the church, Christ's body, means, there seems to be the utmost confusion in regard to "the churches"! The reason why Christians are wrong as to the churches is because they and Mr. H. are utterly wrong as to the church, and make it compatible with independent churches. No doubt he is right enough in pointing out the spuriousness of the denominational language, as indicating ignorance of both the church and the churches; but he never suspects his own errors. None that holds the church doubts of local churches. It is a necessity for men living, but only a circumstantial necessity. But the essential truth lies in "the" church. One is welcomed locally as being of God's church. Its unity was manifested wherever saints were gathered to Christ's name. It was a true church as truly representing the Church. "But now God set the members each one in the body." No such thing is said of a local church.

No possible terms could more subvert the truth of the church than those Mr. H. employs in p. 7 "They had joined themselves to a company of disciples, called a

church, and that church had received them to form part of itself. They had not made themselves a part of the whole church of God. God had done that when He saved them. Neither had the whole church of God received them; but the church that they had joined themselves to had received them, and all the privileges and responsibilities of that God-ordained fellowship became theirs."

This is at bottom the general error of Christendom, not only of the larger corporations of Romanists and Greeks, but of Presbyterians, Congregationalists (Independents and Baptists), and Methodists. One joins a company called a church, to form part of itself. But this is wholly unknown to scripture, which knows nothing of a local church membership, but solely of the church, Christ's body. By receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, sealing us as believers in the gospel of salvation, we become members of Christ and one of another, members of the one body. Romanism had darkened all the truth; and the Reformation was no recovery of the church, but of the Bible to learn how to be justified, and to escape the yoke of a human priesthood and perverted ordinances. Afterwards, not only bad men broke more freely into delusions, but good men into ever increasing denominations of their own members, their own doctrines, alas! too, of their own politics.

What we have learnt from God is that we ought to feel deeply the church's ruin as God's witness, shattered as it is, and in every way in departure from God's mind, glorying in man instead of being in the dust as to ourselves. The truth of the church taught of God would have kept us from the least pretension to set the church up again, or to imitate what the apostles alone did. But if

we have sought to humble ourselves as having taken part ignorantly in this scene of ruin and owning our responsibility before God for the dishonour of His name, we have found that His word provides for this very state of disorder, as for instance in 2 Tim. 2, 3, 4. When leaven is allowed and covered up, when evil, doctrinal or practical, is sanctioned under the Lord's name, and scripture is perverted to excuse error, what is to be done?

God did not leave it to the saint's heart and conscience only, He revealed His own remedy. If after all godly effort to purge it is vain, I must at all cost purge myself out. Thus He arms the soul which might have trembled under fear of schism, or charge of pride, or of despising the excellent. But the Lord is nearer and far more than all, and the word is, "Let every one that nameth the Lord's name depart from iniquity." Now if assured that I am bound up as I am with irremediable iniquity, am I not to obey? It is all the worse if it be in the house of God: why it should be thus bound, and why saints are not troubled by it, one can leave to the Lord who knows them that are His; but I cannot shirk my own obligation in His name to depart from iniquity.

But this is far from all. He instructs us that "in a great house are not only gold and silver vessels, but also wooden and earthen, and some to honour and some to dishonour." To a state so contrasted with the primitive church things were coming! What then is one called to do? "If therefore one purge himself from these ("the vessels to dishonour"), he shall be a vessel to honour, sanctified, meet for the Master's use, prepared for every good work." What an encouragement to cherish a good conscience in the face of fears and frowns!

Am I to dread being left isolated and shut out from the blessed privileges of Christ's body? I am told to flee, like the one addressed, youthful lusts (for Timothy even was comparatively young), and to pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace "with those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." We are entitled to expect fellowship according to God, if we have faith for His glory.

The Church of God

A lecture on Acts 2:41, 42.

As I shall have occasion to refer to not a few Scriptures, I merely take these verses as a prefatory notice of the general character and nature of the church of God. But even before these words could be used, another fact still more fundamental has to be observed, on which a few words seem desirable. “There is one body and one Spirit.” These two truths are inseparably bound together. The one body (and the church is the body of Christ) depends on the presence of the Holy Ghost. Hence the great force of that expression, “One Spirit.” It is the one Spirit who forms the one body.

It is by no means true that the Holy Ghost always acts thus; for in the Revelation (Rev. 1) we read of the seven Spirits of God. It is, of course, no question of founding the church then and there. On the contrary, the church was about to disappear from the world. Its decay had set in, and Christ appears as man, walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, not forming now but judging the seven churches. The first assembly is threatened with having its candlestick removed, the last with being spued out of His mouth, when a new state of things follows, where we have no more notice of the church on earth. It is apparent from Scripture that the church is not intended to go on to the end of the world (though it be a common idea that it will; and that through it the whole world is to be converted). Nor is this an unnatural idea, for those who love the church, desire, of course, to see it spread and flourish. But it is well and safe, and due to God, to be guided in our

thoughts by Scripture, giving up our own theories, and letting God's word alone govern us. The apostasy and the "man of sin" (2 Thess. 2:3-12) are what the apostle speaks of before the day of the Lord; and the church, so far from converting all the world even to profess Christ, is not then to be on the earth at all. In that day is the great harvest of blessing.

Scripture shews us then, that first the church is caught up to heaven; then the Jews are taken up again in divine mercy, though the apostates are cut off, and the nations get blessing through Israel; when, after a series of judgments, follows the millennium, and after the millennium the eternal state — the great white throne coming in between. During the period when judgments precede Christ's appearing (Rev. 6-19), the church is not seen on the earth, but in heaven, already glorified. Saints, there are to be, here below, both Jews and Gentiles, but distinct from each other and no longer united in one body. This will not be the church of God. For therein is neither Jew nor Gentile, but Christ is all and in all. All such distinctions disappear in Christ's body.

Indeed the object of God in the church may briefly be said to be that there should be a body on earth to reflect the glory of Christ in heaven. And who is sufficient to effect this save the Holy Ghost? Therefore is He sent down from heaven before and in order to what is described in the verses I have read in Acts 2. And the Lord Jesus is express that the sending of the Spirit could not be till He departed after dying on the cross for our sins as well as to the glory of God. The action of the Spirit of God is not human force, but compelling by the word: suasion, power in conscience and heart, but also

new creation, as one must add. Yet it is never power coming in that peremptory way which obliges a man to utter this or that. It may be the case with an evil spirit, never with the Holy Spirit, who does not take him, in whom He acts, out of his responsibility to God. We ought to know how true and important this is; for now we are members of His church, and dependent on grace to carry out according to His word. Not only at the start, but all the way through, is this obligatory on the Christian, with constant self-judgment lest we grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

Man's 'High Church,' of which we hear so much, is low indeed, compared with the church according to the scripture. It is to God's church, as the most vulgar gilt compared with gold tried by fire.

The church, then, is founded on the accomplishment of redemption; on the Saviour's taking His place as Head in heaven; and on the descent of the Holy Ghost, to act in this special relation as the One Spirit to the one body; which action will terminate with the church's disappearance from the earth to meet the Lord in the air. Not that there will be no action of the Spirit of God after that; for as the Holy Spirit had always wrought with regard to man on the earth, so this will never cease so long as man is here below. But now it is the Holy Ghost giving one uniform character to the most diversified ingredients ever called into unity. "By one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13). Nothing like this could have been true of old; nor will it be so in the millennium. In Israel there were the displays of the varied perfections of God; but with that

particular nation there was no blending of Gentiles, no forming of one body, but the strictest separation in obedience to God's law.

Doubtless there were no nations as such before the flood; if we go farther back, there was a fallen race, and certain individuals who loved the Lord looked for the Seed of the woman to bruise the serpent, and waited for His coming, as Enoch even prophesied of it. After the flood, God chose a particular man to be the depository and root of promise. To Abraham were the promises made, and to his seed. Look at the seed either in a natural or in a spiritual sense, and there is nothing in this which reveals or even involves the truth of the one body. I know some who cite for this, Psalm 139, "In thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there was none of them"; and Isaiah 26, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise," as bringing it in; but to my mind there is not a notion of it in either passage. God takes pleasure in man's body even now, as He also means it to be very different from what it is. But the church was never a dead body at all, and never will be. The application of the phrase "dead body," to the church, is merely a proof of man's perverse ignorance. It is really ruined Israel that is meant, as the context proves. Of all bodies the church is most of all the one living body as baptised by the one Spirit.

But the solemn fact which the New Testament opens before it, is, without disguise — the total failure of all — be he Jew or Gentile; of which the simple and full proof is the rejection of the Son of God. Everything was buried in His grave; all the hopes of man were laid there for the time; and, therefore, the gospel that went out after the

cross takes the ground that man is wholly lost. Doubtless, people do not like this, and those who do not, need it most; for though they may be always striving, they can never find rest or peace; and, therefore, it is given up in popular theology that every believer is entitled to enjoy certainty of salvation or abiding peace. No doubt there is a testimony which God in His grace keeps up; but this is independent of Christendom, and opposed by most. The testimony may be kept up here or there, even irregularly by a woman; and there could not be a greater condemnation of Christendom's vaunted order than that God's power and blessing should accompany such irregular preaching. Still more that there should be a greater amount of truth in this eccentric work than is found in the accredited teachers and guides. And whence was that truth got? From what it most of all feared, as well as disliked. I do not speak of conversion only, but of Christ better known; for if there be not a deeper knowledge of Christ, it is vain to speak about the church.

Now, the truth shows us Christ totally rejected by man, and further, forsaken of God on the cross; but on that very cross, where man, and Israel, and Satan did their worst, there even God Himself, in judging sin, seemed to do worst of all to Christ, if it were not a ground for atonement. But a work was done which laid the basis for God to dwell with men, making us His house and temple, as the Scriptures affirm. For this purpose Christ had come, to prove to the uttermost what man was in his sin, and what God is in His grace, delivering the believer according to His own perfection. For there is this ground-work for the gospel: the Son of God coming down in love to suffer for sin under God's judgment; and

the Son of man glorified at the right hand of God, as having obtained the victory in righteousness. How blessed is the resulting message which God is now sending out!

There is indeed, much more in the gospel than forgiveness proclaimed. The nature is judged, the old man annulled; the believer has the comfort of counting himself dead to sin, but also the responsibility of walking accordingly. But how grievous to see that the evangelical mind has never recognised death to sin, and therefore has never known how to use the apostle's answer when branded by his antagonists with a tolerance of sin! Doubtless, this is false; but evangelical testimony is imperfect, falling immensely short of the gospel. They do not understand the privilege of the Christian that he has died with Christ to sin. Of course, those that hold it are called Antinomian! But if you affirm that Christ died for your sins, and do not hold yourself dead to sin, you must be at a loss to stand firm and clear; because, taking the ground of law as the rule of life, too often you are sinning, then making excuses for it, and thereon recurring to Christ for forgiveness. Is not this too much like practical Antinomianism? Is it not the teaching of Paul?

The truth is, that besides being washed from his sins at the start, the believer is dead with Christ to sin that he should not allow evil in any of his ways. Nor is there real power against sin practically, until we take our stand on the ground that we are thus dead, and alive in Christ to God. It is all-important, not to Christians only, but to Christ's glory and His work. And not merely is the Christian brought into this place of being dead to sin and alive in Christ Jesus, but the Holy Ghost can and

does dwell in those who are washed from their sins in Christ's blood; and, further, He imprints unity on all who are thus resting on Christ and His work.

Do any, to weaken all this, point to Abraham and the Old Testament saints as being in the same position? Such men do not know what it is to be Christians; I do not say they are not: but they do not know their own place and privileges. It is like a member of the royal family through some strange incongruity ignorant of his own lineage, and therefore in no way taking the relationship or acting accordingly. Such is the state of believers who deny the privileges of the Christian and of the church of God.

The Holy Ghost came down in a marked manner at Pentecost. "A rushing mighty wind" shews the permeating force of the Spirit of God. There was not one tongue merely, but cloven tongues. (Acts 2:2, 3) The message is going out to Jew and Gentile, though there be but one Spirit. As long as our Lord was here below, no such thing was possible. There was no unity, any more than action toward the Gentiles. There were those that followed Him, but no binding in one. The Lord prepared them for what was to follow. "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things," etc. (John 14:26) Union is by the Spirit given or sent, not merely by the faith He works in the soul.

As the effect of the Comforter's coming, He makes the church to be the dwelling place of God. He not merely does a divine work in and by chosen witnesses, but makes a divine institution of the assembly — they become the habitation of God through the Spirit. This

looks at the church in its earthly position; the body of Christ is its heavenly relation. Hence there is the difference that the habitation of God may be entered by those not born of God, still less members of Christ's body. We know such did enter, in early days. But, viewed in its full privileges, the church of God is not only a question of life, but of the Holy Ghost uniting to Christ, and this as a body. "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit." By one Spirit we are baptised into one body. Therefore the idea that the unity of the church hinges only on Christ's becoming a Man is a total fallacy. Incarnation may be and is a step toward it, but is not our union with Christ; it is the union of humanity with Deity, which is not our union at all. When redemption was accomplished, there was a righteous basis for union. Had there been union before redemption, it would have been a slighting of sin. The scriptural place of the church of God maintains the moral claims and character of God with greater fulness than any other. Where the truth is not seen, the law may be talked of, but real holiness in separation from the world is sacrificed or unknown.

After redemption, then, we could be, and are, united to Christ. God could not unite lost man in his sins with His own Son. You will say, Is it not lost man who is united to Christ? Yes: but in the cross of Christ the old man is annulled for the believer; nor is man ever united to Christ till he believes.

Union is not by election, more than by faith, but by the Holy Ghost, "In whom, after ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." All sin is judged to the believer, and then the Holy Ghost takes up His abode in him. It is faith founded, not on promise, but on the

mighty work of the Lord effected on the cross, and it is only after he believes, that union takes place; for the Holy Ghost is given to him because he is a son, on the ground of his being a believer, and not to make him one, which is a previous work. It is, therefore, when by redemption he is out of his sins, when sin in the flesh is judged according to the efficacy of the work of Christ — then comes the Spirit bringing into the one body, and the Christian is a member of it.

The church is not yet spoken of as in heaven. It is here where the Spirit is, who makes it one. Scripture avoids speaking of the body as on high. God foresaw that people would make excuses by saying 'We shall be one body by and by when we get to heaven; but, so many men, so many opinions — we cannot expect to be one body down here!' Thus does unbelief palliate existing divisions. Do they believe in the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven? It is gravely to be doubted. They believe in His person, Deity, and quickening. But do they believe in His special mission to form and maintain the church of Christ? If you are a Christian, if you are sealed of the Spirit, you are a member of that one body; but are you acting on this? Are you displaying it in your daily life ecclesiastically? Or, like the mass of Christendom, have you given it up as bygone, and slipped into one of the many denominations? The truth is not changed, and we are bound to walk in it as much now as ever.

What adversaries do, is to essay the wretched and unloving task of showing up the faults of those who are seeking to act on the principle of the one body. Instead of so degrading an occupation, should Christians come and help if they can. Let them prove their superior wisdom and strength by carrying out the truth better,

not by staying in evil and error, while criticising those who leave it. There is nothing easier than to misrepresent and abuse those who stand for the truth of God.

“There is one body!” Now-a-days, alas! if you are a member of one church, so called, you cannot be a member of another, still less of all. The position of such is essentially sectarian. Ought I then to abide in what I know to be unscriptural? There is one flock. ‘Yes,’ says a modern commentator, ‘one flock, but consisting of many folds’! Did one ever hear of such ingenuity of error? There is a flock, and no longer a single fold now, still less many folds, as he says. There is no such thing as the penning in of the sheep now; there is liberty to “go in and out and find pasture,” but no liberty to do what is wrong. We are not under the restrictions of Judaism. If you have the Spirit of Christ, you are not merely Christians individually, but compose God’s church; and if you are members of God’s church, my advice to you is, Seek no other, and own it really. If there are on earth believers who want no other condition but membership of Christ’s body in godliness and truth, with them is your place to worship and serve the Lord.

While souls, even if awakened, are hesitating about salvation, it is evident what they want is the gospel, not the church; but when you know Christ and His redemption, it is not then only as an individual, but as a member of one body that you have to act: churchmen, not Christians only, we should value only the church of God. Men may be met by all kinds of ignorance and differences; but this does not shake the principle. We learn best “within,” not “without” the church.

On the other hand, remember baptism is properly and entirely outside the church (being a question of the individual), and, therefore, should be settled there. The church of God is on the ground that its members have all received the baptism of the Holy Spirit; yet I own, if people refuse to submit to water-baptism, they would be setting themselves in opposition to the institution of the Lord, and, therefore, should not be received as Christians.

It is plain, however, that the church always did assemble as such in early apostolic times. Disciples might go into the school of one Tyrannus to listen to a lecture; but this, important in its place, is not the church as such gathered in the Lord's name. In that assembly there are two main facts which call them together: first, the Lord's supper; and, secondly, the edifying one another when met together. (See 1 Cor. 11, 14) The Lord is remembered in the one, the Holy Ghost displays His gracious power in the other; though both may coalesce.

I have but drawn your attention to this great truth; but where is the use of being brought into such a relationship if you are unfaithful to Christ: it is a disgrace and a dishonour to it and to you, if, being member of that one body, you never act as such, but go on in a denomination. Do you ever, not to say always, come together as members of God's assembly simply ? Look well to it, that you do no despite to the Spirit in this matter. In order to be a valid assembly of God, it must be open to every member of the body of Christ walking after a godly sort. Refuse none but those who are disorderly in ways, or unorthodox. It is our duty to refuse all, no matter what their name, who are unsound or indifferent as to the humanity of Christ, no less than

as to His Deity. So also indulgence in moral evil is intolerable — drunkenness or the like. The church of God is bound to steer clear of all alliance with iniquity.

Of course there are details in discipline; but discipline is only on the ground I have named. It goes on the same basis as receiving, at least, if we confine it to putting away.

There is room for all kinds of ministry in the church of God; and I should not feel it to be such, if there were any exclusion or enfeebling of a single divine gift. “There are diversities of gifts”; but whatever does not leave room for every gift that God has given is not the church of God acting as such.

Far from taking a high or haughty place, I acknowledge that we are very weak indeed; yet, is there not honesty of purpose in cleaving to what we know to be the will of the Lord for us? But we do not pretend to improve on Scripture, nor to assume an authority which neither we nor others really possess. We are bound to obey, but are not authorised to do all that apostles might, either personally or through chosen associates. The church is the place where the Holy Spirit abides and works for the glory of the Lord. God is dwelling there. Does this claim infallibility for it?

What folly in those who so speak! Are you a Christian? Then God dwells in you. Does this then make you infallible? It is just the same thing with the church. There is infallibility in none but God.

But if God dwell in the church, He is there to make known His mind, and to set right what is wrong. He is interested in it, faithful, too, and cares for all who trust Him. Discipline, in putting away at least, ought never to

be enforced till every means short of this, acknowledged in Scripture and incumbent on the church of God, has been tried and failed; public rebuke, as well as private remonstrance, etc., from suited individuals, might justly precede. Putting away should be the last sorrowful necessity — an act not of any individual, but of the assembly: the reason is wise and good. The best and holiest individuals might, if opposed, have their own minds prejudiced or even their will at work. We ought all to know ourselves better than to desire it to be in the hands of any private individual. It is therefore a great safeguard that the extreme act should be in the hands of the assembly, after individuals, leaders, or other Christians, have failed to bring about repentance.

May the Lord then give you to look to Himself and His word, and to obey it. Do not allow trial of any kind to hinder you; else it is the destruction of faith. Do not allow the faults of those who are on the ground of the one body to hinder you. Love as well as faith should rather prompt you to help them. Bring whatever of strength or wisdom you can to aid their weakness and exposure. It may be that is just the very thing the Lord wants from you. However this may be, if it be God’s assembly, it is the call of God to you. May you hearken to Him and obey! For such a truth, as indeed all revealed truth, is obligatory and practical, becomes a dead weight or a snare if you do not carry it out obediently, and will be a register to your reproof and loss another day. If a divine truth at all, it is a truth for all to act on. It repudiates anything of party, however few may be those who have faith to hold it fast and walk accordingly in this present day of expediency and unbelief. But if it claims all in the name of the Lord, it claims your

adhesion most of all, if you know it to be of God. No difficulties about elders, etc., will excuse you from not acting as a member of the one body according to the word, or from going on with what you know to be a mere sect or denomination contrary to Scripture and grieving to the Holy Ghost, who blesses those who are faithful to what they know, and will clear up, if for Christ's glory, what they do not yet know.

W.K.

Restraint Put on Speaking in the Assembly

Certainly in 1 Cor. 14:27-29 there are restrictive rules put as to speaking in the assembly. The very disorder in the church at Corinth furnished the occasion for the profit of all afterwards. “If any speak with a tongue, two or at most three, and in turn (or, separately), and let one interpret; but if there be no interpreter, let him be silent in an assembly, and let him speak to himself and to God. And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge.”

The apostle had just laid down the great principle, “Let all things be done to edification.” Then he applies it to the two typical or representative cases; to a tongue on the one hand; and on the other to prophesying. He begins with what the vain Greek mind affected most, speaking with a tongue, because it was so open and surprising a witness of divine power. It electrified people. But in an assembly, if alone, it did not edify. Therefore if he who had “a tongue” could not interpret, or no interpreter was there, he must be silent and content with speaking to himself and to God: an excellent lesson, where there was the desire to display that gift. Even if there was an interpreter, edifying required only two or at the most three.

Next, he turns to prophesying which had the highest character of direct edifying, and directs that two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge, not add their lesser mites, which could only distract, instead of edifying, but rather hinder the profit of what came from God. Under this regulation comes teaching of any kind

in assembly for edification, encouragement, consolation, exhortation, warning or any other spiritual aim. More than “two or three,” even if possessed of the most weighty of God’s gifts, is forbidden in the most distinct and absolute way.

The question is, if we believe that grace still preserves meeting in an assembly, and if we in divine mercy cherish so signal a privilege, spite of its absence in general. Are we subject to the “Lord’s commandment” in these things as in all else? It is to be feared that many forget it, and think that prevalent ruin opens the door to laxity and self-will. Perhaps others too have heard not many years since of no less than eight speakers, occupying a professedly Christian assembly, and rather boasting of this plethora of talk, as if it were a proof of zeal, simplicity, or the freedom which the Spirit of the Lord creates. It really indicated their lack of intelligence, in subjection to the inspired word which they could not but know, but failed to recognise; and love of letting their voices be heard on such a solemn occasion, which is meant to witness that God is verily in or among them.

In vers. 34-36 is another and a prohibitory rule, “Let the women keep silence in the assemblies; for it is not permitted to them to speak; but let them be in subjection, as also saith the law. And if they wish to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for a woman to speak in an assembly. What! went the word of God out from you? or came it to you alone?”

Such is His regulation of His assembly. Would we as Christians prefer, or even tolerate for ourselves, an

assembly independent of God, where man speaks as he pleases? How necessary it is to judge ourselves, especially if we exercise the title to judge other people. What is more excellent than obedience?

W. K.

Is the Anglican Establishment a Church of God?

The question is as to its distinctive doctrines and practices, as an ecclesiastical body, not as to what Anglicans hold in common with other Christians. Still less is it a question whether there be real members and ministers of Christ in that body: none but the ignorant, or the bitterly prejudiced, would deny it. The mere assumption of the name — Church of God — is no proof; if it were, the pettiest sect might produce the same pretentions. Doubtless, separation from a Church of God is false ground; but, on the other hand, no institution ought to be owned as a Church, without plain scriptural proof that its claims are well founded.

1. — Now, the grand and characteristic feature of the Church of England (so called) is, that the sovereign of the country is ex officio its supreme governor or head. This makes the Anglican system to be the church of the country. Where is the warrant for it in Scripture? They may refer to Saul doing this — David, Solomon, Hezekiah, or Josiah, doing that. But what is all this to the purpose? They were kings of Israel, whose polity, civil and religious, was divinely ordered as no other nation was, is, or shall be. Our inquiry has to do with the Church of God, on which the New Testament casts as distinct a light as the Old Testament does on Israel. According to the Acts and Epistles, Henry the Eighth could not have been received as a member of God’s Church, yet he took the place of head in the Church of England. In the Church of God, our sovereign lady the Queen could not rule in the humblest way; in the Church

of England she has the chief power. The conduct of bishops is amenable to her judgment as a last resort. Even upon the grave question, whether a given doctrine, held or rejected, unfits a man for induction, she decides through a few lawyers, who form the judicial body of the Privy Council; for, all estates, ecclesiastical or civil, are under her government, as the chief. Such is the doctrine of Art. XXXVII. Is it scriptural or unscriptural? May we not add, (remembering 1 Tim. 2: 11). Is it not anti-scriptural? If men say, Times are changed; the answer is, Alas! they are, but God's Word is unchanged and unchangeable. It would be more candid to confess that the institution is unsustainable by Scripture, in the fundamental point of the royal supremacy in ecclesiastical matters — an innovation never heard of before the Reformation.

2. — Again as to the three orders of Clergy, no such distinction appears in Scripture. It is certain that the terms bishop and elder (or presbyter) were originally used as synonyms, and indiscriminately applied to the same persons. (See Acts 20:17, 28; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3; Titus 1; 1 Peter 5:1, 2.) Next, it is certain from Scripture that none did appoint to the charge of elder or bishop save apostles, or their delegates. Hence, in order to claim a valid ordaining power, people were driven to the idea of apostolic succession: if that be false, as most evangelical men allow, their ordination has no scriptural nor divine authority whatever. But even when there were apostles, and apostolically appointed elders, etc., there were whole classes of ministers, acting both within the church and towards the world, who never needed any human authorization. (Compare Acts 8:1-4; Acts 11:20; Acts 18:24-28; Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 3, 12, 14, 16;

Eph. 4, Phil. 1:14; Col. 2:19; 1 Thess. 5:12, 13; Heb. 13:7, 17, 24; 1 Peter 4:9, 10; James 3:1.) Now, this scriptural principle is flatly contradicted and excluded by Art. XXIII., which teaches that "those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work BY MEN who have publick authority given unto them in the Congregation, to call and send Ministers into the Lord's vineyard." How different is all this from Scripture! There I find our Lord telling His disciples to pray the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth labourers (Matt. 9). It is the householder that hires them (Matt. 20); and again, it is the Lord which called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods. (Matt. 25) And with this agrees the doctrine of the Epistles, as may be seen in Rom. 10:15; Eph. 4:7, 8, 11-16; Col. 4:17. That is, the Scriptures and the Articles are at open war on this point. The former makes the Lord's mission to be the essential thing, the latter makes it indispensable to be called by men. When and how was this public authority given? by whom, and to whom? I admit that you can find it in the Fathers, but not in Scripture, which, on the contrary, shuts out what the Church of England treats as the only lawful call, at least since the Act of Conf. 1662.

3. — Lastly, I would direct attention to the Services for Baptism, the Catechism, and the Order of Confirmation; they do plainly teach regeneration in and by the baptismal rite.

There are three Baptismal Services, all of which exclude any other doctrine. (1.) In the "Ministration of Public Baptism of Infants" the language alike of exhortation and prayer, before the ordinance, supposes the unbaptized infant to be unregenerate. The petition then

was, that the babe might be baptized with water and the Holy Ghost, born again, and received into Christ's Holy Church. After the ordinance, thanks are given that it has pleased God to regenerate the infant with His Holy Spirit, etc. Beyond a doubt, to an unprejudiced mind, the rite of baptism is regarded as the instrument.

(2) The phraseology is, if possible, more defined in the ''Ministration of Private Baptism." It is, "Seeing now, beloved brethren, that this child is by baptism regenerate, and grafted," etc. Again, "I certify you that in this case all is well done, and according unto due order, concerning the baptism of this child; who being born in original sin, and in the wrath of God, is now, by the laver of regeneration in baptism, received into the number of the children of God, and heirs of everlasting life.'' (3.) The "Ministration of Baptism to such as are of riper years" proves how consistent these services are in this heretical dogma. For while these adults are regarded as believers previous to their baptism (and therefore the god-parents do not promise on their behalf) they are regarded in the exhortation as not yet having remission of their sins. Therefore the prayer runs thus: "Give Thy Holy Spirit to these persons, that they may be born again, and be made heirs of everlasting salvation;" and so throughout the service, which is essentially similar, of course, to those for infants. They are certainly considered to be unregenerate up to the moment of the rite. The case of such as are of riper years, therefore, heightens the confusion, aggravates the evil, and proves incontestably that the services attribute regeneration to the sacrament. When they are baptized, and not before, the word is, "Seeing now,

dearly beloved brethren, that these persons are regenerate," etc.

Next, the words of the Catechism are equally precise, for, in the answer to the second question, the child is to say that his godfathers and godmothers gave him his name in his baptism; wherein he was made a member of Christ, etc. And though he is taught that repentance and faith were required of persons to be baptized, the latter is to believe the promises of God made to them in that sacrament. Such faith, I need hardly say, is worthless, because it rests on a foundation of sand. It is the church, so called, not God, which has made promises in a sacrament. Lastly, the Order of Confirmation seals this deplorable system of false doctrine and delusive ordinance. For after the misguided young have taken upon themselves the Sinai-like vows, which their god-parents had at first promised for them, the bishop says, "Let us pray. Almighty and ever-living God, who hast vouchsafed to regenerate these thy servants by water and the Holy Ghost, and hast given them forgiveness of all their sins, strengthen them," etc. Thus far, all is harmonious error.

Membership with the Church of England rests on this sacramental foundation. And violent indeed are the efforts of godly Churchmen to evade the plain language of the Book of Common Prayer. In it the whole baptized population are regarded, according to the Romish model, as the Church. No wonder that men, surrounded by such a state of things, ask, "What is the world?" All are treated, in virtue of baptism, as born again, as therein made members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. No godly man can hinder this. It is the regular course and aim of

Anglicanism,1 not an abuse; so much so, that if a minister or a member were in these points to act scripturally, he must act schismatically. In other words, the actings of the Spirit Himself would be condemned as schismatical, if judged by the Services and Articles, the Rubrics and Canons of that system — a most solemn consideration for those who are upholding or in any way sanctioning it! No system can be of God, where the ways of a formalist might be canonically right, and those of the Holy Ghost must be canonically wrong; and this, notwithstanding many excellent persons there, is exactly true of the English Establishment. It is in vain to say, "I do not believe in baptismal regeneration:" the important point is, What says the English Church? And this must be determined by the literal and grammatical sense of the formularies. In these all the members are supposed to acquiesce; if they do not, they have no business there — they ought to leave.

Thus, whether you look at the headship, the ministry, or the membership of the Anglican body, the system, as such, is thoroughly and hopelessly without Scripture, and opposed to it. Dear brethren in Christ, ought we not to obey God rather than men? And what is the difficulty? Nothing but unbelief. Let us then have done with "my church" and "your church," and retrace our steps to the ground which we ought never to have left — the ground of the Church OF GOD. This is not schism, but separation from evil, which is God's principle of unity; as man's principle is the mingling of light and darkness, of the world and the Church — in a word, BABYLON. To stand aloof from what is holy and true is a sin; to separate from what is unholy and untrue is a Christian duty. If the national body be unscriptural, to renounce

all connection with it (not with the Christians in it) is a matter of simple obedience to God. “Cease to do evil: learn to do well.”

1 Hence, says the Rubric, appended to the order of the Communion, “And note that every parishioner shall communicate at the least three times in the year, of which Easter to be one.” The curate has power to refuse no moral worldly man, but only an open and notorious evil liver or one guilty of known wrong. The gathering together of God’s children (i.e. the Church of God) is not and cannot be contemplated there. Therefore it is that the celebrated Hooker, who will not be accused of bearing false or incompetent testimony, does not scruple to say (Eccles. Pol. book viii, vol. iii, p. 290, ed. Oxford, 1793,) “There is not any man of the Church of England but the same man is also a member of the commonwealth, nor any member of the commonwealth which is not also of the Church of England.” Could this be said of a Church of God, according to His Word?

The Judgment, not Reunion, of Christendom

It need not surprise anyone that, in a letter to the Archbishop of York (in 1896), an experienced and able politician of the day has expressed the hopes of such as look for a reunion of Christendom. Some were unprepared for this, and are pained at a tone throughout very deferential to the Pope, to say the least. In fact, however, Mr. Gladstone is more consistent with himself than on most of the burning questions he has ever approached. Christendom has always been a cherished idol. In this he is unchanged still.

Now, if we believe the scriptures, Christendom spiritually judged is a ruin; and this by the confession of almost every conscience when probed. The Pope, to begin with, acknowledges it in his manifold anathemas; so in effect do Mr. G. and all that yearn after reunion. Were things according to God, there would be room for neither. Much more deeply do those feel the ruin who habitually in sackcloth and ashes confess the sins which caused it. By divine constitution all the saints since Pentecost had originally but one communion. There might be thousands or myriads that believed (Acts 21:20); but they were “the church of God in Jerusalem,” in Antioch, in Corinth, in Ephesus. So it was everywhere in apostolic days. Churches in distinct provinces or countries of course there were. But the gospel even then was preached everywhere, the Lord working with those who preached (Mark 16:20; Col. 1:6, 23); and the believers throughout the earth were builded together as

God’s house, a living God’s assembly, pillar and base of the truth.

On a rough reckoning of Christian profession, there are said to be 216 millions of Romanists; but there are 137 millions of Anglicans, Lutherans, Reformed and other Protestants, and 97 millions of Greeks, orthodox or others, with Nestorians, Copts, Abyssinians, etc. There are at least as many that bear the Christian name outside as within Romanism, though itself containing far more than any other single denomination. But unity there is none. Can any claim be weaker in presence of the facts? It is equally certain, that holy unity in the truth ought to have ever been, and that it has for ages ceased to be. The claim therefore is now demonstrably false, its absence a sure proof of ruin. Catholicity of the visible church is a self-complacent dream. And if apostolicity in the historic sense count, it is plain that Rome cannot vie with Eastern churches, which, planted by one or other apostle, were ruled by St. John, the last. Rome never had apostles save as prisoners or to die; the assembly therein was planted or ruled by none of them. As to this scripture is decisive.

Much is argued in a human way for succession. But what faces the believer first to last in scripture is the vanity and breakdown of man, no matter when, where, or how tested by God, no matter what the privileges conferred on man. So it was with Adam, with Noah, with Abram, etc.! with Moses, Aaron, and Israel; with Saul, David, and Solomon; with Nebuchadnezzar or any other of the Gentiles. In nothing did God fail, but sustained faith, notwithstanding failure in His own; yet man failed under each and every trial. Meanwhile God pointed to the Second Man Who not only stood perfectly, but will in

the end gloriously display all the titles which crumbled away in the first man and his sons: the Last Adam, First-born of all creation, Governor of the earth, Seed of the woman and of promise, Priest on His throne, King in Zion, Son of man Whom all the peoples, nations, and languages shall serve in the age and habitable earth to come.

But is not the church an exception to the law of human failure and misery? By no means. Hence the momentous caution (and to the saints in Rome notably in Rom. 11 by the great apostle of uncircumcision), that they should not be wise in their own conceits. If the professing Gentile did not continue in God's goodness, "thou also shalt be cut off," as the Jew had been. Are any so blind, hard, or high, as to say that Christendom has continued in His goodness? Will the Pope affirm it of half the baptised? Will the Protestant of the Romanist majority? Will the pious Anglican say it of his own community? Will a God-fearing Nonconformist plead, Not guilty, for his society or for any other? But if it be so, scripture (without a single qualifying word in any other passage, with many and even more solemn menaces elsewhere) lays down inflexibly, "thou also shalt be cut off."

Christendom, mother and daughters (Rev. 17:5), falls under the universal sentence. God's ways with the faithful fail now no more than ever; God's purpose of grace will be established in Christ and the church on high beyond all the power of the enemy. But there is no difference from the Jew in the Gentile as to responsible profession on earth. The one exception is the Lord Jesus, Who will give effect to this as to every other design of God in the coming day. He, not the Pope, is the head of the body, the church; He Who is the beginning, first-born

from the dead (for it is in this condition, not as incarnate merely, that church relationship begins), that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.

Let none deceive in any way. The day will not be, as the apostle assures, except the falling away, the apostasy, first have come (not reunion but apostasy, unless indeed the two coalesce) and the man of sin have been revealed, the son of perdition (2 Thess. 2). Those who believe with Luther and Calvin and Knox, with Cranmer and Jewel and Parker, with Baxter and Howe and Owen, that Romanism is the apostasy and the Papacy the man of sin, must profoundly regret the aged statesman bowing before Pope Leo XIII., and deprecating that which the power behind the Vatican will demand in their never-failing pride and the unslumbering thirst after universal domination for their chief. But while it is sheer unbelief to doubt that Rome is the harlot of the Apocalypse, a more audacious portent will be the issue of the baptised, including Popery and Protestantism and Jews too, in a more complete apostasy, and in the exaltation of the lawless one whom the Lord will destroy by His shining forth, and thus introduce the days of heaven on earth, as He alone is competent and worthy and fore-appointed.

With this agree all the oracles of the New Testament as of the Old. The darnel (Matt. 13) ruined the crop; but there is no remedy sanctioned till the Son of man judges in the consummation of the age (13:27-43). As in the days of Noah and of Lot, so it will be when the Son of man is revealed (Luke 17), not reunion but judgment of the quick. 1 Tim. 4 and yet more strongly 2 Tim 3 prove non-continuance in God’s goodness, and therefore the necessity for excision (as in Rom. 11). And what mean 2

Peter 2, Jude, 1 John, and the Revelation? Even 1 Peter 4:17 declared the time come for judgment to begin at the house of God.

Individuals may be through grace delivered. But evil as a whole once insinuated abides worsening till divine judgment; which assuredly is nigh, as the Lord is ready to judge living and dead. The hope of reunion for Christendom is not only unwarranted by one word, but opposed to the uniform testimony, of the Lord and His apostles. It springs from fallen self; which first departs from God's will, and then neglects or defies His word, never abandoning vain trust in man. The prophets declare that God will in sovereign grace restore Israel. The New Testament is equally explicit that He will destroy, not restore, Babylon.

How can sober man expect her who says in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall in no wise see mourning, to quit her spurious throne, and to betake herself to the dust in repentance? Now especially, that they have set up an impeccable woman and an infallible man as their new calves of gold? Does her forehead yet blush for worship in one form or another to the virgin and the angels, to dead men's bones and clothes, to the crucifix and the wafer? Is she ashamed of a celibate priesthood with its auricular confession and other horrors direct and indirect? Does she repudiate her pretended transubstantiation, and her real enmity to scripture reading? Has Rome delivered herself from that lie in her right hand, the Mass? On her own showing it is a propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead. This would be, according to scripture, a sacrament, not of the remission of sins (as the Lord's supper announces), but of their non-remission. Is it not a sacrifice avowedly

going on day by day, with just the same proof of inefficiency as in Jewish sacrifices, which the Epistle to the Hebrews contrasts with the offering of Christ's body once for all (Heb. 9, 10), and its result now to the believer? For where remission of sins is, "there is no more offering for sin." This the gospel proclaims, and the Mass contradicts: a different gospel, which is not another.

What then can one think of Anglicans listening to Rome, when their own Articles of Religion (xxxi.) pronounce that the sacrifices of Masses are "blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits?" and (xix.) that Rome "hath erred not only in their living and manner of ceremonies, but also in matters of faith?" Has not the profound and progressive alteration of the last half-century in the Anglican body been a return not to "that which was from the beginning," but to the rites and doctrines of unreformed Christendom in East and West? Has it not led to this retrograde letter by Mr. G.?

If you value scripture, if you cleave to the gospel, if you have redemption in Christ, if you honour the Son as the Father, if you know that corporately you are God's temple and your body a temple of the Holy Spirit, beware of reunion with the city of confusion, doomed to destruction as God is true. Beware even of looking back, lest you become a pillar of salt. For God is not mocked, and the Lord may be provoked to jealousy.

W.K.

Since this warning was written in 1896, the outcry for the Reunion of Christendom has been continued in ever-widening circles and in ever-increasing volume and intensity by religious and political leaders alike.

Scripture foretells that this coalition will be formed, and that it will flourish externally for a while, but that it is doomed to a spectacular destruction by the judgment of the Lord. Mr. Kelly's solemn warning is re-issued with an earnest desire that its readers may avoid all contact with this unhallowed scheme.

The upsurge of the so-called ecumenical movement, nurtured by the liberal and modernistic World Council of Churches, together with the call of Pope John for greater tolerance and prayers for a moving together of the Protestant and Roman Catholic bodies, make this challenging article even more relevant to our day.

Spring, 1963.