# Straight Paths for the Children of God

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Plain Words Concerning the New Birth, Assurance, Two Natures, the Holy Spirit, Inspiration, Separation, the Church, Fellowship, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, Clerisy, Ordination, Ministers, Sectarianism

> "*Make straight paths for your feet*" *(Hebrews 12:13)*
> "*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good*" *(1 Thess. 5:21)*

## Introduction

The Word of God teaches: The Church of God is one body (Eph. 4:4); all Christians are members of it (1 Cor. 12:13); Sectarianism, which is "schism" in the body of Christ, is sin (1 Cor. 1:10); Christ is the centre of gathering; believers ought not to meet on the ground of any doctrine or truth, however precious, nor should they assemble in the name of any man, sect or party (Matt. 18:19, 20); liberty should be afforded for the exercise of the "gifts" bestowed by the risen and ascended Head of the Church (1 Cor. 14:31); the hope of the Christian is the return of the Lord Jesus to take His people to be with Himself (Titus 2:13).

## The New Birth

Nicodemus, the learned Jewish rabbi, was startled by Christ's declaration—"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God" (John 3. 3). Though educated, moral, and religious, the Lord Jesus, in answer to his enquiry, emphasized His statement in the words—"Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye MUST be born again" (v. 7).

What is the reason of this necessity? Some look upon it as an arbitrary decree on the part of God to hinder earnest, seeking souls from obtaining salvation. This is a great mistake. There is a moral necessity for regeneration. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (v. 6), and can never be anything else. Cultivate it, improve it, religionize it, it is still "flesh." If one were taken to Heaven without being "born of God" (1 John 5. 1), he would be wretched and miserable. "The carnal mind"—or the mind of the flesh—"is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8. 7, 8).

All of us by nature are "children of wrath" (Eph. 2. 3). Some imagine that they were born into the world "Christians," but they are mistaken. We were all born sinners to start with. "Through the one man's disobedience, the many were made sinners" (Romans 5. 19, R. V.) By the fall of Adam the many—that is all of us—were made, or constituted sinners. If we were to ask a Sunday School class "What is a sinner?" most likely the reply given would be "one who sins." But the answer does not go deep enough. Men are constituted sinners by virtue of what they are, not on account of what they do. Men sin because they are sinners. No one is guilty of Adam's transgression, though all suffer on account of it. An apple tree is an apple tree in January as much as it is in September when it is laden with golden fruit. Because it is an apple tree it bears apples. The new birth is an absolute necessity in order to be a child of God.

Let us see what the Scriptures say about it. "Being born again not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible by the Word of God" (1 Peter 1. 23). The Holy Spirit is the

author of the new birth, but it is through the word of the truth of the Gospel that sinners are born anew. "As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His Name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1. 12-13, R. V.) It is by receiving Christ that one is born of God, and to receive Him is to believe on Him. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God" (1 John 5. 1). By believing on the Son of God Who loved him and gave Himself for him the unconverted reader will be born again (John 3. 3), saved (Romans 10. 9), forgiven (Acts 10. 43), obtain eternal life (John 6. 47), peace with God (Romans 5. 1), and be "justified from all things" (Acts 13. 38, 39). "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3. 16).

## Assurance of Salvation

Some declare that it is "presumption" for any one to say that he knows he is saved. All we can do, it is confidently affirmed, is to "hope" for the "best" and wait until the "great day" to see where we are to spend eternity. But such teaching is not according to God's Word. Christians, in apostolic days, had no doubts about their salvation from sin's penalty. For proof of this let us appeal to Scripture. "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. 5. 1). "We are confident," we are "always confident" (vv. 6-8). "In Whom we have redemption through His Blood even the forgiveness of

sins" (Eph. 1. 7). "Being justified by faith we have peace with God" (Romans 5. 1). "We know that we have passed from death unto life" (1 John 3. 14). "I write unto you little children because your sins are forgiven you, for His Name's sake" (1 John 2. 12). If God tells me that by believing on Christ I am forgiven, which is the greater "presumption," to believe or doubt His testimony? Scripture declares that those who believe on Christ are forgiven. "Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10. 43). I believe that Christ bled and suffered and died for me, and according to God's Word, my sins are remitted or pardoned. Am I "presumptuous" in taking Him at His Word and believing that I am forgiven? In Acts 13. 38, 39, it is distinctly stated that "All that believe are justified from all things." I do believe on Christ, and God's Word says I am "justified from all things." Ought I to doubt my justification, or believe that I am justified because God says so? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16. 31). I do believe on Him Who died on Calvary for all my sins, and according to God's Word, I am saved. Shall I "set to my seal that God is true" and thank Him for salvation, or shall I disbelieve Him and assert that "no one can know that he is saved until the great day"? "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness (or testimony) in himself; he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son; and this is the record that GOD HATH GIVEN TO US ETERNAL LIFE and this life is in HIS SON; he that hath the Son HATH LIFE and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5. 10-12). Scripture says that those who believe on Christ have everlasting life (John 3. 16; 6. 47). I do believe on Him, and therefore I have

everlasting life. If I did not believe that I was the possessor of everlasting life, I would be guilty of the horrid sin of making God a liar, and I dare not commit such a heinous offence. "Verily, verily I say unto you," says the Lord Jesus, "he that heareth My Word and believeth on Him that sent Me HATH everlasting life, and SHALL NOT come into condemnation (judgment, R. V.), but is PASSED from death unto life" (John 5. 24). All who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ are privileged to say "GOD LOVED, GOD GAVE, I BELIEVE, AND I HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE."

## Law and Grace

All who are under the law break it, and if obedience to it is necessary to eternal life, who can be saved? "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight" (Romans 3. 20). God's Word assures us that "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (John 3. 36; 5. 24). Scripture nowhere says that "He that keepeth the moral law shall inherit eternal life." "Eternal life" is a gift, and cannot be earned by law-keeping (Rom. 6. 23). "If righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain" (Gal. 2. 21). The law never called on anyone to give all his goods to the poor. That would be loving his neighbor better than himself. If by the "law" is meant the expression or communication of the will of the Creator, all beings are responsible to obey Him. That will, however, may be expressed at various times and in different ways. The expression of God's will to Adam was different from that given to Noah; and the expression of His will to Abraham was different from that given to Israel. In the case of Adam a single prohibition was sufficient. "Thou

shalt not eat" (Gen. 2. 17) was his rule of life. This was "law" to him. He transgressed the command, and by it fell. The Christian, in God's reckoning, is no longer in the "flesh" but "in the Spirit" (Romans 8. 9), and as a risen man in Christ is exhorted to walk worthy of His calling. "For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow His steps" (1 Peter 2. 21). None of the moral principles inculcated by the law will be ignored by the believer. Knowing that he is "under law to Christ," he desires to walk "even as He walked" (1 John 2. 6). "The righteousness of the law" will be fulfilled in him (Romans 8. 4), not because the law says, "Thou shalt not," but on a much higher footing.

## The Two Natures

That such expressions as the "old nature" and "new nature" do not occur in Scripture any more than the words "substitution" or "trinity," we frankly admit. The doctrine, however, is clearly and fully unfolded. The believer is viewed in Scripture in two aspects—as a child of Adam and as a child of God. The "nature" he inherits from Adam is incurably bad. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3. 6). The two are not merged in one. They are essentially different, and are opposed to each other. "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8. 7, Margin). "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other" (Gal. 5. 17). Sometimes it is asked, "What is saved and sanctified? Not the old nature; it cannot be remedied, they say. Not the new, for

it was never lost or defiled; it is perfect and sinless." In reply we would remark that it is not the "nature" that is saved or sanctified, it is the man himself. We do not regard either the "old nature" or the "new nature" as the man. "Nature" and "person" are widely different terms. A man who was dead in trespasses and sins is the same person now that he is a Christian. It is the man who acts, not his "nature"; it is the man who is accountable for his acts, not his nature; it is the man who sins and is the sinner; it is the man who is pardoned and sanctified.

Speaking on the subject of regeneration, Dr. Ryle, Bishop of Liverpool, the well-known tract writer, says: "It is a new creation. It is the calling into existence of a new creature with a new nature, new habits of life, new tastes, new desires, new appetites, new judgments, new opinions, new hopes, and new fears. All this, and nothing less than this, is implied when He declares that we need a new birth." Dr. Baldwin, Bishop of Huron, remarks that "The old heart will not therefore be re-made or changed. It will continue to the end, the same utterly hostile, corrupt nature that was at the first" ("Life in a Look," p. 39). Dr. James H. Brookes, of St. Louis, writes thus: "Do what we will with the nature we receive by birth from the first Adam; improve it, reform it, cultivate it, refine it, baptise it, confirm it, make it join the church, it is still the flesh and it is still enmity against God" ("The Truth," vol. 5, p. 100).

## Judgment of Believers

The popular idea is, that at the "last day" there will be a general resurrection of the just and the unjust; that then it will be settled what men were, not merely what they did, whether they were children of God or children of

wrath. Scripture does not countenance such a doctrine. The Lord has said, "He that heareth my Word and believeth Him that sent Me hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life" (John 5. 24, R. V.) Though the believer's sins will not be brought up to condemn him (see Isa. 44. 22; Micah 7. 19; Isaiah 43. 25; Heb. 10. 17), he will be "manifested" at the judgment seat of Christ, and will either "suffer loss" or be rewarded. When the Lord Jesus comes to the air for His Saints, those who have fallen asleep and those who are alive on the earth will be caught up together to meet Him (see 1 Thess. 4. 14-18). This is the "resurrection of the just," the "first resurrection" (Luke 14. 14; Rev. 20. 5). At this resurrection none of the wicked dead shall be raised. After believers are glorified there will be a special judgment of believers before a special tribunal. This is not a judgment of their state, but of their works. "For we (believers) must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5. 10, R. V.; see also Romans 14. 10-12). Faithfulness to Christ will then be rewarded. "Each man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire, and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work shall abide which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward; if any man's work shall be burned he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved yet as through fire" (1 Cor. 3. 13-15, R. V.) Those believers who have built upon the foundation (Christ Jesus), that which is represented by "wood, hay, and stubble," shall "suffer loss," but they themselves shall be saved "so as through fire." Their service does not stand the test, and they are eternal

losers thereby, though their souls are saved. Those who have been making it their daily business to please God irrespective of consequences, will receive a reward. Their service, represented by the "gold, silver and precious stones," stands the action of the fire. The testing refers to the quality and not the quantity of the service.

## The Security of the Believer

Some Christians maintain that true believers may fall away and be eternally lost. Scripture does not say so. If a boy disobeys his parents does he cease to be their child? Assuredly not. Neither does a Christian cease to be a child of God through failure. Though disobedient he is still a son of God, having been born into the family (John 1. 12, 13; Gal. 3. 26), and that relationship can never be destroyed. The words of the Lord are simple and explicit: "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish" (John 10. 28). When a believer sins he does not require to be regenerated a second time. His duty is to confess his sins to his Father, and He has promised to forgive him (1 John 1. 9).

Eternal life is not bestowed at the end of life's journey, or at the resurrection; it is given the moment a sinner accepts of Christ (John 3. 16, 36; 6. 47). "Eternal life" is a "gift" (Romans 6. 23), but the "crown of life" (James 1. 12) is a prize, or a reward for faithfulness. Though every child of God has eternal life, all will not have the "crown of life." The saints at Smyrna were exhorted to "be faithful unto death" (even though death sealed their testimony), and they would receive a "crown of life" (Rev. 2. 10). There are at least four distinct crowns spoken of in Scripture which will be awarded by the

Lord Jesus to believers, viz., the "incorruptible crown" (1 Cor. 9. 25), the "crown of righteousness" (2 Timothy 4. 8), the "crown of life" (James 1. 12; Rev. 2. 10), and the "crown of glory" (1 Peter 5. 4). The Lord's words to the Christians at Philadelphia are equally applicable and needful for believers now: "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Rev. 3. 11).

## The Work of the Holy Spirit

Whilst owning that man in his natural state is utterly depraved and unable to do anything to save himself, and that it is the Spirit's work to convict of sin and lead to Christ, we ought to remember that souls are saved, not on account of a work done in them by the Holy Ghost, but on account of a work done for them by the Lord Jesus eighteen hundred years ago. In all ages the saints of God have had the Spirit, but at Pentecost He was "given" in a special manner. The characteristic of the dispensation of grace is that the Holy Spirit dwells in believers. In past dispensations Old Testament saints could pray, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me" (Psalm 51. 11). Since Pentecost, believers are indwelt by Him; otherwise how can we explain such Scriptures as the following: "The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7. 39). "When the Comforter is come whom I will send unto you from My Father" (John 15. 26); "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you" (John 16. 7). No unsaved person has the Holy Spirit. The passage in Luke 11. 13, has perplexed some. "If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" The "Comforter" had not then been "given"; the

Lord Jesus had not then been "glorified" (John 7. 39). Christ has been "glorified." The Holy Spirit has been "given"; and the Christian does not need to pray that he may receive the Holy Spirit, being already indwelt by Him and "sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4. 30); He is the earnest of his inheritance (Eph. 1. 14); his comforter, teacher (John 14. 26), helper and guide (Gal. 5. 17, 18).

## The Inspiration of the Scriptures

There are three great forces at work today in Christendom, viz., Romanism, Ritualism, and Rationalism. Many who admit that the Bible is a "good book" deny that it is the Word of God. Some say that it is "inspired" but claim the same kind of "inspiration" for the writings of Shakespeare, Milton, Plato and others. In Peter's second Epistle, chapter 1 and 20 we read that "no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation." That is to say that it "did not arise or originate out of the writer's own interpretation or imagination." The next verse explains the reason: "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but Holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Paul writing to Timothy declares that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3. 16). The inspired writers do not use the word "Scripture" of any writings but the Sacred Scriptures. Inspiration is spoken of the writings—"All Scripture." "A Scripture or writing is made up of letters and words and not of invisible thoughts only; but we are told all

Scripture is given by inspiration of God; what is written is therefore inspired of God; and that which is inspired of God is all Scripture; it is all that is written" (Dr. Gaussen).

In former days, those who attacked the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures were from without the professing Christian church; now they are from the pulpit and theological chair. It is related of Thomas Carlyle, the Chelsea Sage, that on a certain occasion noticing Dr. Stanley, Dean of Westminster, walking in front of him he remarked "There goes Dean Stanley boring holes in the Church of England." To-day clergymen and theological professors are doing the very same thing in the various denominations with which they are connected.

Dr. James Kerr, Glasgow, in his timely book entitled "The Higher Criticism: Disastrous Results" proves conclusively by copious quotations from the addresses, speeches and writings of Professors George Adam Smith, Dr. Denney, and Dr. Marcus Dods, of the Glasgow United Free Church College, that they are unsound on the subject of inspiration. Dr. Kerr shews that "They hold that the Word of God is not inspired; it contains errors, legends, and myths; that it represents fictions as facts; that it has errors in its original documents, that it has many contradictions, contains contradictory teachings, has irreconcilable discrepancies, sanctions atrocities, contains forged books. They also teach that the first eleven chapters of Genesis are full of legends, that the Bible account of creation is a myth, that the Bible story of Adam and Eve is a fable, that the Bible story of the Fall of Man is a fiction, that the Bible story of the Flood is an invention, that the Bible stories of the Patriarchs

are fancies, the Bible stories of Moses are a fraud, the Bible stories of Elijah and Elisha are superstitions, that the Bible story of Jonah is a nursery rhyme, the books of Chronicles are very 'precarious,' the Prophetical books have alterations to suit the times, that the God of the Bible was originally a tribal God," etc., etc.

If the teaching of these theological professors is true, that the Bible is unreliable and uninspired, why believe it to be the Word of God? The Lord Jesus said to the Jews, "If ye had believed Moses ye would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me. But if ye believe not his writings how shall ye believe My Words?" (John 5. 46, 47). Was Christ mistaken? Again and again He quotes from the Old Testament showing that He believed in its inspiration and inerrancy.

1. He refers to the creation of our first parents (Mark 10. 6).

2. He speaks of the deluge (Luke 17. 26, 27).

3. The murder of Abel (Luke 11. 51).

4. The destruction of Sodom (Luke 17. 28).

5. The Brazen Serpent (John 3. 14, 15).

6. The cleansing of Naaman of leprosy (Luke 4. 27).

We must not allow man to take from us a single word of the Holy Scriptures. "For ever, O Lord Thy Word is settled in Heaven" (Psalm 119. 89). Inspiration is claimed only for the original manuscripts in which the Scriptures were given. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets" said Christ; "I am not come to destroy but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle, shall in no

wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5. 17, 18).

We heartily endorse the words of Dr. Bishop—"Verbal and direct inspiration is therefore the Thermopylae of Biblical and Scriptural truth. No breath, no syllable; no syllable, no word; no word, no book; no book, no religion." "There is no half-way house" said Sir Leslie Stephen, once a clergyman, but afterwards an unbeliever, "between the doctrine of verbal inspiration and a total abandonment of the Christian Faith."

## Separation from the World

A Christian, though in the world, is not of it (John 17. 16). He is one with Christ in His rejection (Matthew 10. 24), and may expect similar treatment to that which his Master received. He may count on persecution, if faithful to God and the Word of His Grace. "As then, he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now" (Gal. 4. 29). He knows that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God; whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4. 4). He is promised "tribulation" while in it (John 16. 33), and is told that because he has been chosen out of it, the world will hate him (John 15. 19). He is exhorted by the mercies of God, not to be conformed to the world (Romans 12. 2), but to be separated from it (1 John 2. 15). He is commanded to "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2. 15).

The "Church" and the "world" are contrasted in Scripture, though we often hear professing Christians speaking of the "Christian world" and the "Religious

world." All who have not been regenerated by the Holy Spirit compose the "world," whether "religious" or "irreligious," moral or immoral. Some of the unsaved are travelling on the clean side of the "broad road," and others on the dirty side; but both classes are hastening to everlasting perdition. Though there are multitudes of religious professors in these "last days" of this dispensation, God's people are but a "little flock" (Luke 12. 32).

Innumerable passages might be quoted which show that the Christian is to be separated from the world. We would, however, specially refer to one. "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what portion hath a believer with an unbeliever? Wherefore come ye out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (2 Cor. 6. 14-18, R. V.)

Innumerable attempts have been made to break the force and blunt the edge of this plain and pointed precept. Some have had the hardihood to assert that the injunction does not apply to Christians at the present time; that it was a special command given to the believers at Corinth, and is not binding on us. Are we then at liberty to reject those portions of Scripture which do not suit us? Were the epistles to the Corinthians not written for our instruction and guidance? The first epistle is (ch. 1. 2) addressed not only to the saints in Corinth, but to "All that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours," and in view of those who would detract from the Word, Paul, writing by the Holy Spirit, added,

"If any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14. 37). The "command" is from the Lord, and is addressed to, and is therefore binding on all Christians. "Believers" are persons who have been born again of the Holy Spirit, and "unbelievers" are those who have never experienced the great change.

It is maintained by some that the injunction is to be limited to "marriage." Doubtless the marriage of a believer with an unbeliever would be an "unequal yoke." But there are many other "yokes" in addition to the matrimonial one. The Lord does not specify the character or object of the "yoke" but the command is explicit and comprehensive, and applies to anything in which we voluntarily unite with others to attain a common object. A Christian should not marry an unbeliever, nor enter into business partnership with an unbeliever, nor join "societies" or "clubs" with unbelievers, nor enter or continue in church fellowship where known unbelievers are admitted. The child of God should persistently refuse to be "yoked" with the unconverted, whether for matrimonial, commercial, religious, or benevolent purposes.

"What communion hath light with darkness?" (verse 14). "Ye were once darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord" (Eph. 5. 8). What "communion" can a child of light have with a child of darkness? At creation God divided the light from the darkness (Gen. 1. 4). "What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" (2 Cor. 6. 15). The word translated "infidel" is the same Greek word that is rendered "unbeliever" in verse 14. The Revised Version has "unbeliever" in both cases. What fellowship, then,

can there be between a believer and an unbeliever? The one is a child of wrath, and the other an heir of Heaven; the one is a friend, the other is an enemy of God (Romans 5. 10). Of Israel it was said, "The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations" (Numbers 23. 9). Children of God are a redeemed people, and it is the divine purpose that they should be consecrated and separated to Himself.

"But with what subtlety and effrontery Satan opposes," says one, "or seeks to neutralise every precept of the Lord. When pressing this command upon the consciences of God's children, how constantly is it cast aside with the remark, 'It is impossible to tell who are believers and who are not,' 'the tares and the wheat are to grow together,' 'you are commanded not to judge,' etc., etc.; as if the apostle would exhort the saints to a separation that is impossible; as if the tares and the wheat being allowed till the end of the age to grow together in the world (the field is the world, not the 'Church,' see Matt. 13. 38), implies their being yoked together in the Church; as if the command not to judge, implied that the believer was to close his divinely enlightened eyes to the difference between light and darkness, between life and death, between Christ and Belial."

Again and again we have been grieved and shocked as we have listened to persons telling how they were invited, urged, and pressed to "join the Church" while unsaved. On pleading personal unfitness, and suggesting delay, they were assured that it was their "duty" to "observe the ordinances," that it was "time" for them to "make a profession of religion," and they were "of age," and So-and-So was "joining." Some have said that they

attended the "minister's class" and on answering certain questions satisfactorily as to the facts and doctrines of Scripture, they were admitted into communion. Others have spoken of being "confirmed" by the Bishop, and led to imagine, whilst unconverted, that they were in a fit condition to observe the Lord's Supper. No inquiries were made as to when, where, or how the great change had taken place, or for that part of it, if it had taken place at all. They were received, to use a popular expression, "on their own responsibility." Large numbers of "members" of the various denominations make no profession of being regenerated. If this is doubted, ask the average religious professor how long it is since he was "born again," or "saved" and you will discover the truth of the statement. In our experience we have found that the most bitter and determined opposition to plain, searching, and awakening preaching comes from unconverted professors, who, while having a "name to live," are spiritually dead.

## A Clergyman's Testimony

Dr. Robert Knox, a devoted and gifted Presbyterian minister, at a Christian Convention (attended by believers of the various denominations) in Belfast, in May, 1881, in the course of a soul-stirring address asked, "Why are so many of our Church members so slow to speak? In nine cases out of ten they know they have no right to do so. They have not yet settled the question of their soul's salvation, and hence there is no freedom" (see the "Christian," of London, England, June 16th, 1881). Nine cases out of ten Church members unconverted! What a terrible admission! What a sad confession! Think then, of Christians sitting side by side

at the communion table with those who make no profession of being born again, passing the bread and wine to them and helping them to perdition. And this is done under the plea that "we have no right to judge"! Are we not at liberty to "judge" those to be unsaved who themselves confess that they have not been regenerated? "We cannot help sitting at the table with the unconverted," one may reply. But you can stay away, and Scripture commands that you should not be "unequally yoked" with unbelievers. "There are unsaved people in all communions," it is affirmed. Supposing this to be true, is there not a vast difference between persons "creeping in unawares" (Jude 4), professing to be converted, and persons received without being asked if they have experienced the great change? We are told that we "should not judge." But the injunction (Matt. 7. 1) surely does not mean that we are not to "discern," and "discriminate" between "light" and "darkness," between the saved and the unsaved, for Scripture plainly declares, "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7. 20), and "Do not ye judge them that are within?" (1 Cor. 5. 12). The Word of God distinctly commands "believers" not to be yoked with "unbelievers," and it is, therefore, their duty to discern or judge in the matter. Christians are permitted to marry "only in the Lord" (1 Cor. 7. 39). If one entered the matrimonial yoke with an unbeliever, would the popular plea that he "had no right to judge," be acceptable to God? Assuredly not. The excuse bears the stamp of Satan, and shows how successfully the arch-enemy of souls has broken down the wall of separation between the Church and the world.

The supposition that the Lord Jesus allowed Judas to partake of the Supper is the excuse given by many for continuance in fellowship with known unbelievers. But a careful study of the Gospels will lead to the conclusion that Judas was not at the Supper, though present at the Passover. The Paschal feast preceded the Supper. Judas ate bread with Christ, and dipped his hand with Him in the dish (see John 13. 18; Matt. 26. 23). This was at the Passover, at which Judas, as a descendant of Abraham was entitled to be present. The words, "He then, having received the sop, went immediately out" (John 13. 30; Matt. 26. 21; Mark 14. 21), show that this took place before the Supper was partaken of. After this the Supper was instituted and celebrated. Judas, therefore, could not have been present. Luke's narrative (which has perplexed some) speaks of Judas' hand on the table after Supper was observed. But this was manifestly not the order of events. Bible students are aware of the fact, and commentators have again and again remarked, that the order of Luke's Gospel is moral rather than chronological.

## "What Church Should I Join?"

This is a question that is often asked by young Christians. Some are advised to "stay where they are"; others are exhorted to go where they will be "best fed" or be able to do "most good." Such directions are unscriptural and misleading, and proceed on the assumption that God has not given instructions in His Word on the subject.

Which of the sects does Scripture counsel believers to "join"? All of them certainly cannot be right. "They should join the good old Church of England," say many.

What portion of God's Word speaks of the Church of England or of any other national "Church"? Are not all kinds of heresies upheld within its pale? Is not the dreadful, soul-destroying doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration taught in its standards? In the service of "Infant Baptism" we read, "Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this child is by baptism regenerated and grafted into the body of Christ." It is distinctly asserted in the Catechism that in baptism an infant is "made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven." Multitudes are deceived by this satanic lie, and believe that they were regenerated when babies at their baptism, and do not require to be "born again." Should Christians, whose desire is to please the Lord, support a system in which fundamental error is upheld?

If a "Church of England" clergyman is charged with heresy, the Bible is not brought into court. It is the "Prayer-Book" which has to decide; and, however serious the error, if not condemned by the Prayer-Book, he is at liberty to hold it! The consciences of numbers of Christians seem to be little exercised about their association with evil. From the way they speak and act, one might conclude that they did not think that such Scriptures as the following were binding: "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5. 11); "Come out from among them and be ye separate" (2 Cor. 6. 17). Many wink at evil, and excuse themselves for membership in unscriptural associations, by such pleas as, "It is only a matter of opinion"; "I would not dare to differ from such able men as So-and-So"; "It matters little where we go," etc., etc.

What scripture is there for "joining" the "Methodist Society"? It is not required of applicants for fellowship in that denomination that they profess conversion to God. One of the "Rules" declares that "There is only one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies, a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and be saved from their sins." Should any but those who have already fled from wrath to come be encouraged to partake of the Lord's Supper? Multitudes who once had "a desire to flee from wrath to come, and be saved from their sins," are now beyond the reach of hope. What passage of Scripture exhorts believers to "join" the "Presbyterian," "Baptist," or "Congregational" communions? None! If, then, the Word of God (the believer's "Inquire within upon everything") does not even mention such "churches"; if in their constitution they are opposed to that Word, and if the Church of God is "one body" (Eph. 4. 4; 1 Cor. 12. 13), why should Christians join any other "body"?

Two Christians met in a railway train, and in the course of conversation one inquired of the other what denomination he belonged to. "That is a common enough question" was the reply, "but will you say first what is to guide me in my path as a Christian?" "God's word." "If you will allow me I will answer your question by proposing another—'What denomination does the Word of God put me in?'" On thinking for a little he replied "None at all." "Then I cannot belong to any, for according to your own shewing, I should be in a position where the Word of God had not placed me." "Are we not exhorted in Scripture not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together?" (Heb. 10. 25). "Yes it does, but a Christian does not need to belong to a denomination to

obey that word, for the Lord Jesus says, 'Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them'" (Matt. 18. 20).

## Is Denominationalism Scriptural?

When told that we ought to connect ourselves with some sect, we ask, "With which?" All cannot be right. Which is the scriptural one? What sect did Paul, Peter, or John belong to? Were they "Methodists," "Presbyterians," or "Baptists"? "There were no sects in those days: believers were all together." But should they not be together still? Why should there be "sects" now?

If by one Spirit all believers are "baptised into one body" (1 Cor. 12. 13); "if the Scripture be a revelation from God, then of necessity (as has been well remarked by another), the formation of various bodies, the union of Christians by what distinguishes them from one another, the adoption of human creeds (as if the Word of God were not full enough or plain enough for the guidance of His people) must be sin." Paul beseeches his beloved Corinthians that they "all speak the same thing," and that there be "no divisions" among them (1 Cor. 1. 10). "For ye are yet carnal, for whereas there is among you envying, and strife and divisions, are ye not carnal?" (1 Cor. 3. 3). Though outwardly one, they were divided in heart, and were ranging themselves under different leaders. This was sectarianism in the bud. Denominationalism scatters the children of God instead of bringing them together. It invites all who are like-minded on certain truths to form themselves into a distinct "body," "sect," or "society," instead of "gathering simply to the Name of the Lord." It may be replied that "We shall never all see alike on earth." Is that any

reason why we should not seek to please the Lord, and endeavor to be of the same mind and judgment? We should not "agree to differ," but we ought to ask our God and Father to make us of "one mind." The Lord prayed that His disciples "might be one; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me" (John 17. 21). The spectacle of several scores of parties separated from each other because they cannot agree is not calculated to accomplish this object!

It is amazing what excuses are given for the perpetuation of sectarianism. We are pointed to the learning and ability of some in the sects; to the earnestness and devotedness of others. Honoured names of great and good men who have done much for the spread of the Gospel and the defence of the truth are brought forward to justify continuance in unscriptural positions. If Martin Luther had remained in the Roman Catholic communion would that have justified "Protestants" in being "Romanists"? The various sects have been compared to regiments of an army all under the same commander, and guided by his instructions. The comparison is most misleading. Let us suppose that the Emperor of Germany appoints a general to be his commander-in-chief. For a length of time his orders are strictly and faithfully obeyed. But by-and-by the soldiers form themselves into companies, each company appointing its own officers. Whilst still professing to maintain their allegiance to the Imperial Crown, could they be properly called the Army of the German Emperor? When they set aside the authority of their commander, would not each regiment be in a state of mutiny? And would it be right for loyal German soldiers to uphold such divisions? This aptly illustrates the

condition of Christendom. Instead of a united army of Christian soldiers, subject in all things to the will of their Commander-in-Chief, the Lord Jesus, we have an innumerable host of "divisions," with self-appointed, or division-appointed, officers, who have formed their own "rules" and "regulations," each differing from the other.

We are thankful to see of late years among Christians in the denominations a greater desire for fellowship. Conventions and united prayer meetings are increasing, and believers, for the time being, "forget" that they are sectarians, and, as it is called, "shake hands over the wall." What a pity it is that there are any sectarian "walls"! Who built them? Who props them up? God or Satan? May it be our firm determination not to allow ourselves to be enclosed in any such "walls." "The attempts at unity made from time to time by the denominations (says one) only manifest the utter hollowness of the basis, as long as the cause of the difference remains untouched. Such unions are invariably founded on the understanding, expressed or understood, that what are called 'controverted doctrines' that is such as are held by some and not by others, are to remain in abeyance. Now, if these are considered of sufficient importance to ordinarily bring about separation in that which God designed should be one, on what authority are they sunk, whatever the motive may be? Again, if they are so trivial that they can be shelved at pleasure, how can those so acting clear themselves of the charge of schism?" "I beseech you, brethren, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no schisms (Greek) among you" (1 Cor. 1. 10).

When George Whitfield separated from Charles and John Wesley, some of his friends advised him to start a new sect. To this suggestion the great field-preacher replied —

"*Let names and sects and parties fall,*
*And Jesus Christ be all in all.*"

## Ground of Gathering

"Where two or three are gathered together in My Name there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18. 19, 20). Not merely gathered "in" ("en") His name, as that would not necessarily mean more than gathered by His authority, but gathered unto ("eis") His name, implying that Christ's Name is the centre of gathering. Christ's Name is the expression of what He Himself is. It has been often alleged that the promise refers to a few gathered together for prayer. His promised special presence to the "twos" and "threes" gathered to His Name is connected not only with meetings for prayer but with Church gathering, worship, and discipline (see Matt. 18. 15-18; 1 Cor. 5. 4). To gather Christians around any other centre than Christ is to divide them. Sects are gathered on the ground of acceptance of certain doctrines on which they are agreed, and reception of these doctrines is expected from those who join the party. Christians may not yet have learned them if they are to be found in the Word, or they may reject them, because they are not in the Word, but in either case unless they do violence to their consciences they cannot become members of the particular sect, for there is no Scripture for gathering on the ground of any doctrine or truth however precious. Christians are not enjoined to gather on the ground of the "one baptism" or the "one

body." When this is done a truth or doctrine is elevated into a "ground of gathering" instead of Christ Himself. Of late years most of the sects have become exceedingly "liberal" and accommodating. If a Christian thinks of becoming a member of a particular denomination, but cannot conscientiously accept its doctrinal declaration, he is assured that it is unnecessary for him to believe it!

## A Distinguishing Name

There are those who say, "You must have some name to distinguish you from other Christians." To this we would reply, "What distinguishing name" had John, Peter, or Paul? The names which God applies to His people include the whole body of Christ: "Believers" (Acts 5. 14), "Saints"* (Phil. 1. 1), "Brethren" (2 Thess. 1. 3), "Disciples" (Acts 20. 7), "Children of God" (John 11. 52), "Christians" (Acts 11. 26). The Holy Ghost through the Apostle Paul rebuked the Corinthians for ranging themselves under the names of different leaders, and saying, "I of Paul," "I of Apollos," while some even went the length of saying "I of Christ," to the exclusion of other believers. If, then, they were "carnal" through so acting, are Christians in these days "spiritual" who commit the same sin? The divisions now are, "I of the Methodist," "I of the Baptist," "I of the Presbyterian," "I of the Church of England," "I of the Salvation Army," etc., etc. "But you are called 'Plymouth Brethren,'" some may say. We reply that the world has called us by various nicknames. We are, however, neither "The Brethren," nor "Brethren" (Capital B.), nor "Open Brethren," nor "Close Brethren," nor "Plymouth Brethren." We are "brethren" of all believers, but distinctly refuse to take any sectarian name. If fellow-

Christians call themselves by names that do not include the whole household of faith, such as "Baptist," "Methodist," etc., etc., and come under the same condemnation as the Corinthians, we cannot have fellowship with them in such unsubject conduct, even though we should be counted "narrow" and "bigoted."

* Paul never spoke of Peter as "Saint Peter"; Peter never called Paul "Saint Paul." Christians ignorantly speak of a select few of God's people as "saints," whereas every child of God is a saint. (See Rom. 1. 7; Eph. 1. 1.) Peter, the converted shoeblack, is as really a "saint" as "Saint Thomas" or "Saint John."

Some denominationalists in defending sectarian names, affirm that it matters little by what name Christians are called. We may be unable to hinder persons from calling us by sectarian names, but that is a very different thing from acknowledging and designating ourselves by such appellations. It is admitted that there will be no sectarian names in Heaven. Why, then, should there be any on earth? "Call not yourselves Lutherans" said the great German Reformer; "Who is Luther but a miserable bag of dust and ashes? Call yourselves Christians after Him who died for you!" But alas! This advice was not heeded.

## Christian Baptism

The Lord Jesus instituted two ordinances for the observance of His people, Baptism and the Supper. The Lord's Supper shows forth Christ's death for us, and Baptism our death with Him. Baptism is a type of death and resurrection. It is also an act on the part of the Christian by which, having died and risen with Christ, he acknowledges the claims of Jesus as Lord. "We were

buried therefore with Him through baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6. 3, 4, R. V.; Col. 2. 12). As the believer goes under the waters of baptism he declares "I am buried with Him by baptism into death"; and as he rises from the typical grave he can add, "Like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, even so I ought to walk in newness of life." In baptism the Christian confesses his identification with the Lord Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection. Baptism is neither a means of salvation nor the door of entrance into the Church. It is a profession of faith on the part of the believer; and in submitting to the ordinance he virtually says, "I have died with Christ, I have been buried with Christ, and I am risen with Christ."

Christian baptism was instituted for believers only (see Matt. 28. 19, 20 and Mark 16. 16). In apostolic times whenever a person believed, he was baptised (see Acts 2. 41; Acts 8. 12; Acts 10. 48; Acts 16. 15, 33; Acts 18. 8; Acts 19. 5). There is not a single example in Scripture of infant baptism, nor the semblance of a command to baptise infants. In a catechism on Protestantism, inspired by Rome, the following directions are given: "When a Protestant offers you a pious book praising the Bible to the skies, and attacking at the same time the truths of our faith and Christian practice, under the pretext that they do not find them in the Bible, ask him where he finds in the Bible that it is right to baptise little infants, which they do just the same as ourselves."

The scriptural mode of baptism is by immersion. "Baptism" ("baptismos") is a Greek word with two letters omitted. Why was the word not translated? Because at

the time the translation was made, sprinkling had been adopted. The Greek verb "Baptizo" signifies to "immerse," "submerge," "sink," "dip." (See any Standard Greek Lexicon.) In the Greek Church baptism is performed by immersion. One would naturally suppose that Greeks should be well acquainted with their own language.

We give the testimony of some representative men in the various denominations which practice infant sprinkling, etc. Calvin, the Reformer, says: "The word 'baptise' signifies to immerse, and the rite of immersion was observed by the ancient Church." JOHN WESLEY, in expounding Romans 6. 4 ("Buried with Him by baptism"), says: "The allusion is to the ancient manner of baptism by immersion." Dr. Stanley, Dean of Westminster, in his article on Baptism, which appears in the Nineteenth Century (October, 1879), declares that "for the first thirteen centuries the almost universal practice of baptism was that of which we read in the New Testament, and which is the very meaning of the word 'baptise,' that those who were baptised were plunged, submerged, immersed into the water. Baptism by sprinkling was rejected by the whole ancient Church (except in the rare exception of death-beds or extreme necessity) as no baptism at all." DR. TULLOCH, Principal of St. Andrews University, in Good Words for February, 1871, says: "Adult baptism and baptism by immersion were the rules in the early Church: every scholar knows this." DR. WHITBY (Church of England): "Immersion was religiously observed by all the Christians for 13 centuries and was approved by the Church of England." DR. WALL: "Immersion is so plain and clear by an infinite number of passages that one

cannot but pity the weak endeavour of such as would maintain the negative of it." MARTIN LUTHER: "I could wish that such as are to be baptised should be completely immersed in water according to the meaning of the Word and the significance of the ordinance." BISHOP HANDLEY MOULE: "True, Scripture indicates a usage of immersion in the apostolic missions, very plainly."

## Subjects of Baptism

"Households were baptised, and there must have been babies in them." Such is one of the props on which infant sprinkling rests! Three households are mentioned as having been baptised, viz., the household of Lydia (Acts 16), the Philippian jailor (Acts 16), and Stephanas (1 Cor. 1. 16). To establish infant baptism it is necessary to prove that there were infants in the households, and that such were baptised. Of Stephanas' household it is said they were the "first fruits" of the preaching in Achaia, and that "they addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints" (1 Cor. 16. 15). Could infants "addict themselves to the ministry of the saints"? Does the Word not inform us that the jailor "rejoiced greatly with all his house"? (Acts 16. 34, R. V.) Lydia's household is frequently adduced to support infant baptism. But before this can be established, it is necessary to show (1) that Lydia was, or had been, married. (2) That she had children, and that some of them were infants. (3) That she had brought them to Philippi. (4) That such infants were actually baptised. "There might have been babies in the household," it is said. In order to prove infant baptism to be a scriptural doctrine, there must be stronger evidence than that derived from mere

supposition. "There couldn't have been infants in the jailor's household," said one, "for wasn't the youngest eighteen years of age?" "Where do you find that?" said another, sharply. "Where you find there were infants: I guessed it." The Word of God gives no room for such "guessing." "Many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptised" (Acts 18. 8). This is God's order still —hearing, believing, and then baptism.

"Baptism has taken the place of circumcision," it is affirmed. No passage of Scripture says so. On the contrary we find that numbers were baptised in addition to being circumcised (Acts 15. 1, 2). If baptism takes the place of circumcision, only male infants should be baptised (Gen. 17. 12). If baptism is substituted for circumcision, domestic servants of Christians should be baptised, whether believers or not (Exod. 12. 44). But if baptism has really taken the place of circumcision, the analogy is in favour of believers' baptism. If a literal infant under the law corresponds to a literal infant under grace, then only babes in Christ should be baptised. As natural life and birth were pre-requisites for circumcision, so spiritual life and birth are pre-requisites for baptism. Often the question is asked, "Does the Word of God forbid infant baptism?" To this we might reply, Does God's Word forbid the baptism of bells? (practised by Romanists). There is as much Scripture for the baptism of bells as there is for the baptism of babies.

## Testimony of Scholars

Many of the ablest teachers in the various denominations which practice infant baptism, admit that there is no Scripture for the sprinkling of infants. We

select a few testimonies of such. BISHOP HANDLEY MOULE: "In the New Testament we have not indeed any mention of infant baptism." DR. PLUMMER, Master of University College, Durham: "The recipients of Christian baptism were required to repent and believe. Not only is there no mention of the baptising of infants but there is no text from which such baptism can be securely inferred." PROFESSOR LANGE of JENA: "All attempts to make out infant baptism from the New Testament fail. It is totally opposed to the spirit of the apostolic age and to the fundamental principles of the New Testament." PROFESSOR SCHLEIERMACHER: "All traces of infant baptism which one will find in the New Testament must first be put into it." PROFESSOR MEYER: "The baptism of children is not to be considered as an apostolic institution." DR. AGAR BEET (Methodist): "It must be admitted that the New Testament contains no clear proof that infants were baptised in the days of the apostles."

"C. H. M.," author of the valuable "Notes" on the Pentateuch, writes: "For my own part—seeing the question has been forced upon me—I can only say that I have for 32 years been asking in vain for a single line of Scripture for baptising any save believers. Reasonings I have had, inferences, conclusions and deductions, but of direct Scripture authority, not one tittle."

The question to be considered by those desirous of pleasing the Lord should be, "Does Scripture inform us that infants were, or should be baptised, and if so, in what passages can it be found?" "I thank God that I baptised none of you" (1 Cor. 1. 14) is often quoted. But the Apostle does not thank God that the Corinthian saints were not baptised, and thus make light of the

Lord's command. He gives his reason: "Lest any should say I had baptised in mine own name" (v. 15). Again and again we hear professing Christians saying that "baptism is not essential to salvation." Quite true, but it is essential to obedience on the part of those who are disciples of Christ. When Abraham was commanded by God to offer up Isaac, he did not say that the offering up of Isaac was not "essential to salvation," and that he could "get to Heaven" without it. All who really believe on the Lord Jesus Christ are saved, whether baptised or not. Obedience is the fruit and proof of love; and the words of the Master are suggestive, "If a man love Me he will keep My words" (John 14. 23). One has forcibly remarked, "When people speak of 'essentials' and 'non-essentials' they generally mean by the former what concerns their own salvation, and by the latter those things which only concern the glory of God!" If then baptism was instituted for believers and you are one and have not been baptised why tarriest thou? "Arise and be baptised." Though believers' baptism is clearly taught in the Scriptures, we do not see why a sect should be built on the ground of its acceptance calling itself "Baptist." There is as much authority in Scripture for starting a new sect on the ground of belief in the other ordinance calling itself "Lord Supperist."

## The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is designed for believers and believers only. Only those who know the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour can "remember" Him. It was "disciples" that came together to "break bread" (Acts 20. 7). The Lord's Table is for the Lord's people. The basis of Christian fellowship should be

broad enough to embrace all whom God has received (subject to such limitations as are specified in the Word). "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye" (Romans 14. 1); and the ground of this reception is, "God hath received him" (v. 3). If, then, God has received one we are bound (apart from the question of Scriptural discipline) to receive him. "Once an assembly is satisfied that the person is a believer, he cannot be either expelled or rejected, excepting there is plain Scripture warranting such a course" ("The Basis of Fellowship," by J. R. Caldwell).

A lady in Glasgow desired to be received by a company of Christians that gathered simply and solely in the name of the Lord. They were satisfied that she was a child of God and instructed her in the truth of baptism. She stoutly affirmed that she was baptised when a baby. They sought to show her from Scripture that she had not received Christian baptism and that it was her privilege and duty to be baptised. Whilst strongly contending that she had obeyed the command of the Lord, she said, "I am satisfied that I was baptised, but so anxious am I to be received that I am willing to be re-baptised." They could not, however, undertake such a responsibility until she saw it to be God's will. Seeing it was not a question of submission but of intelligence, she was "received." Not many weeks after, she learned the truth represented by the figure, and was buried in the waters of baptism. Life and not light, is the scriptural basis of Christian fellowship. We should receive believers not because of whence they come, but because of what they are.

It was the Apostolic custom for Christians to assemble themselves on the "first day of the week" to "break bread." "Upon the first day of the week when the

disciples came together to break bread" (Acts 20. 7). Not the "first Sunday of the month" nor the "first Sunday of the quarter." Through the traditions and commandments of men the Lord's Supper is only observed occasionally by the majority of professing Christians. On the plea of making it "too common" or "inconvenient," once a month or once a quarter suffices. To "break bread" was the object for which the early Christians assembled themselves on the first day of the week. They did not come together to hear Paul "discourse with them" (Acts 20. 7, R. V.), though the Apostle availed himself of the opportunity of doing so. Doubtless there would be special occasions for teaching and exhortation in addition to the meeting for breaking bread.

The following is the substance of a conversation which took place between a Christian lady and an evangelist: "I trust," said she, "that you had a good time this morning at your meeting: we had a capital discourse from our minister." "We always have a 'good time,'" said the gospeller. "We went to meet the Lord Jesus, and when thus assembled we cannot be disappointed." "Suppose Queen Victoria," he added, "announced her intention of holding a levee in W——, and you were invited to meet her in a certain place, on a certain day, at a certain hour. Suppose, also, that a nobleman from the Court of St. James visited W——, and announced his intention of giving an address or lecture about her Majesty on the same day, at the same hour, whether would you meet the Queen or go and hear what the nobleman had to say about her?" "Of course I would go and meet the Queen." "The difference between you and me," he continued, "is this: I went to meet the Lord Jesus Himself at His own

table, and you went to hear what one of His ministers had to say about Him." Many of God's dear children, like the lady, instead of seeking to remember the Lord in the breaking of bread on the "first day of the week," are satisfied to hear what some of His servants have to say about Him.

In the early days of the Church there was nothing known of "officials" presiding at the feast of remembrance. At the institution of the Supper it was the Lord who gave thanks, broke the bread, and handed it to the disciples (1 Cor. 11. 23-25). All they did in the matter was to receive from His hand the symbols of His body and blood. From this Scripture, it is supposed that the "minister," for the time being, is in the place of the Lord Jesus, presiding at His table, and "dispensing the sacrament." When Christ instituted the ordinance He did not say to John, "When I am away you will preside at the Supper." While on earth, He was in the midst of His gathered ones, and has He not promised that "where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them"? (Matt. 18. 19, 20). If then, the Lord is "in the midst" of the twos and threes gathered unto His Name, why should any of their number assume to take His place? Though unperceived by the bodily eye, He is visible to the believer by the eye of faith. "You might join our church," said a "Baptist" Christian to a friend. "Who presides at the Lord's table?" "Mr. P. (the minister) does." "If the Lord were to enter the meeting-house what would Mr. P. do?" "He would rise and allow Christ His place at the head of His table." "Has Christ not promised that where two or three are gathered together in His Name He is there in their midst? And if He is in 'the midst,' why should Mr. P.

usurp the Lord's place at the head of His table?" The question it is needless to say remained unanswered.

The Word of God is silent about ministers "administering the sacraments." There are no "sacraments" in the New Testament. The word "sacrament" is derived from "sacramentum," an oath. Roman citizens, on enlistment as soldiers, took the "sacramentum" or military oath of allegiance to their country. Whilst remembering the Lord in the "breaking of bread" the believer takes no "oath" or "vows" upon him: he keeps a feast. There is no proof whatever that it was considered necessary to have the presence of elders, bishops, or "ministers" when believers were assembled to break bread. We do not read that the "Reverend So-and-so administered the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper." Such ecclesiastical phraseology was then utterly unknown. On "the first day of the week," when the disciples were gathered together to "break bread," elders or bishops, if present, would take the bread and wine among the rest; but the "sacrament" and the "clergyman" had not then been invented.

A suggestive correspondence appeared in the pages of the Canadian "Baptist" denominational organ. It seems that a small "Baptist" congregation in a thinly settled district of Ontario, had been for several years without the services of a duly qualified and regularly ordained "minister." During that period they had been disobedient to the Lord (if non-observance of the one ordinance is disobedience, so must non-observance of the other) in not coming together to "break bread." One of the correspondents took New Testament ground maintaining that the little company was entitled to observe the "sacrament" even though no ordained minister was

present. Another correspondent disagreed contending that if such unseemly and unauthorized conduct were tolerated by the "Baptist" denomination it would inevitably lead to "Plymouthism." Whether or not ecclesiastical permission was given to the Church to obey the Lord, we cannot say.

## "The Principles Won't Work"

It is often said that the principles advocated in these pages "won't work." If they are divine principles it is our responsibility to carry them out, in dependence on the Holy Spirit. Failure in carrying out God's principles cannot alter or affect them, and surely responsibility does not exceed ability. It is well, however, to remember that New Testament principles require New Testament power in order to their successful operation.

An old and esteemed friend of ours used to tell a story of a conversation that he had with a Church of England clergyman whom he met in a railway carriage. In the course of conversation the clergyman remarked, "I never try to drive the people to Church. I often say to my parishioners that they should do about spiritual things as they do about their groceries, go where they get best served. If the Methodist parson does more good than I do, let them go to him by all means." Mr. H. replied that while that was very liberal from his point of view, it appeared to him to be very wrong. "If what you are doing at Church," said he, "is what the Lord has commanded, then they ought to be all there, if they are God's children. But if it is contrary to Scripture, however much they might like it, neither you nor they have any business there." "Oh," said the Clergyman, "I don't think God has given us any direct instruction as to such

things. I believe He gives us considerable liberty to follow what we find most suitable to our own particular case, and that we are quite justified in choosing accordingly." Mr. H.'s reply was as follows: "On the contrary, I find the Word of God just as explicit about these things as it is with regard to the way a sinner must be saved." "I should like you very much to show me where," was the clergyman's response, and most willingly we took out our Bibles and turned from passage to passage. We saw how those who gladly received the Gospel were baptized, and how they continued steadfastly in the doctrine of the apostles, and in the fellowship and in the breaking of bread and in the prayers (Acts 2. 41, 42); how the disciples came together on the first day of the week to break bread (Acts 20. 7); how that when the saints were gathered together all might prophesy one by one, that all might learn and all might be comforted, and yet that all must be subject one to another (1 Cor. 14. 31, 32); how older ones in each assembly were to feed the flock, and take the oversight thereof, looking for their reward when the Chief Shepherd shall appear (1 Peter 5. 1-4) and much more. At last as our journey was drawing to a close, he said, "I have been deeply interested in all you have been saying. It is very beautiful; indeed as a theory it holds perfect, but it seems to me that in practice it would need some supernatural power to make it work." "Undoubtedly," we replied, "that is just what it does want; and what do you suppose the Holy Ghost was given for?" "Oh," he replied in astonishment, "I never thought of that." Many, like the clergyman, never think of the ministration of the Holy Spirit in guiding believers when they meet to carry out God's Word. In Paul's 1st Epistle to the Corinthians we see the "gifts" mentioned

which the risen Head of the Church has given, and it is said "All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man (R. V. each one) severally as He will" (v. 11). If the various "gifts" are used under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, God's people will be established, strengthened and settled in the faith.

## "Clergy" and "Laity"

Before the "world" took the professing Church under its patronage, no such "caste" distinctions as "clergy" and "laity" were known. The word "clergy" comes from "kleeros," signifying heritage (1 Peter 5. 3), and is applicable to all believers. Those not of this assumed priestly caste are called "laity," from "laos," "the common people," "the rabble." The thought of a "clergy" is a class of persons "having officially a right to leadership in spiritual things, a nearness to God derived from official place, not spiritual power." On account of this official place accorded to the clergyman, he is the only one in the congregation who is supposed to have authority to "administer the sacraments": the others are mere "laymen," and dare not undertake such "priestly" duties. What portion of Scripture speaks of two classes in the Church of God, called "clergy" and "laity"? Where do we find mention of a class of men called "clergy" (distinguished by a special title) appointed to conduct the service and worship of God? Are not all God's children "priests" (1 Peter 2. 5-9)? Have all believers not a title to "draw near" to God and offer up spiritual sacrifices (Heb. 10. 22; Heb. 13. 15)? Dr. Stanley, Dean of Westminster, speaks thus in his "Christian Institutions" of the order of the "clergy"—"In the first beginning of Christianity there was no such

institution as the 'clergy'" (page 19, New Edition). Dr. A. T. Pierson says—"These terms 'clergy' and 'laity' were the invention of the devil in the 'Dark Ages.' The introduction of this distinction into the Church of Christ was not only an invention of the devil but a master stroke of Satan-craft." (Pages 31 and 32 of "Divine Enterprise of Missions.")

Is it not unscriptural to "give flattering titles unto man" (Job 32. 21), and especially a title that belongs to God alone? "Holy and Reverend is His Name" (see Psalm 111. 9). Any one taking the title of "reverend" acts contrary to the principle enunciated in Matt. 23. 8-12. When the "Church" married the "world" priestly orders, robes, and vestments were established, and professed ministers of Christ so far forgot the spirit of this present dispensation as to set up an order of ecclesiastical nobility to have spiritual dominion over Christendom. Hence they have as the counterpart of His Majesty the King His Holiness the Most Holy Father, His Grace the Duke, His Eminence the Cardinal, The Most Noble the Marquis, His Grace the Archbishop, The Right Honourable the Earl, The Right Reverend the Lord Bishop, The Right Honourable Viscount, The Very Reverend the Archdeacon, Barons and Baronets, Reverend Doctors and Reverends.

C. H. SPURGEON in speaking of preachers taking the title of "reverend" remarks: "It is at any rate a suspicious circumstance, that among mankind no class of persons should so commonly describe themselves by a pretentious title as the professed ministers of the lowly Jesus! Peter and Paul were 'right reverend' men, but they would have been the last to have called themselves so. A lad fresh from college who has just been placed in

the pulpit is called the 'Reverend Smith,' whilst his eminently godly father who has for fifty years walked with God has no claim to such reverence. We wonder where men first sought out this invention, and from whose original mind did the original sin emanate. We suspect he lived in the Roman Row in 'Vanity Fair,' though the 'Rev.' John Bunyan does not mention him. One thing is pretty certain, he did not flourish in the days of the 'Reverend Paul,' or 'Reverend Peter' or 'Reverend Apollos.'"

## "Don't You Believe in Ministers?"

We certainly believe in the Divine institution of the Christian ministry. Special "gifts" have been bestowed by the Lord Jesus Christ, the risen Head of the Church. "Unto some He gave apostles, prophets, pastors and teachers . . . till we all come in the unity of the faith" (Eph. 4. 11-13). We have not, however, been able to find in Scripture any traces of such a person as the modern minister of a church or congregation. On the contrary, we find a plurality of "elders," "bishops," or "overseers" (see Acts 20. 17; Acts 14. 23; 1 Peter 5. 1). While contending for a special and distinctive ministry on the part of those who are gifted, we also believe in a general ministry in which all Christians have a place. The Church of God is compared to a human body, each member having its own functions to perform. "The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee" (1 Cor. 12. 21). "Now hath God set the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased Him" (verse 18). "Having then gifts differing" (Romans 12. 6). While there are different gifts, one is not to be magnified above another. If, however, one member of the body absorbs

the functions of other members: "if one member be appointed by man to supply that which God has supplied through 'every joint,' and can only be conveyed to the edifying of the whole 'according to the effectual working in the measure of every part' (Eph. 4. 16), is it any wonder that Christians should be starved, in bondage, in darkness, in division?"

In Christian assemblies there ought to be liberty and scope afforded for the exercise of the "gifts" that Christ has bestowed. That such liberty has been given by the Holy Spirit is clearly evident from 1 Cor. 14. 23-40. At the present day one person is to be found called "the minister," claiming to have exclusive right to instruct and exhort companies of professing Christians. This authority is obtained by virtue of his official position towards them. The "minister" is expected to have at least three distinct gifts, viz., those of the "evangelist," "pastor," and "teacher." Seldom, however, do we find all these possessed by any single person. A "minister" may be an "evangelist" and no "teacher," and is therefore unable to build up; or he may be a "teacher" and not an "evangelist," and the bulk of his hearers be unconverted. "If any human barrier be raised to prevent the exercise of any gift that God may have committed to any believer, the Spirit is in such measure quenched, the nourishment that would minister to the body from the Head is intercepted; leanness, division and error must soon follow."

A Presbyterian paper says—"It takes 10 years to make a good minister." Man-made ministers are not satisfactory. Every believer is responsible to the Lord for the exercise of whatever gift he may have received. He does not require to wait for human authority or "license" to teach,

preach, or exhort. "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4. 10, 11). It may be objected that where there is liberty of ministry, incapable men will attempt to minister whom God has not qualified. But failure on the part of those who seek to carry out God's principles can never alter or affect the principles; and surely Scripture provides for all contingencies!

## "Choosing" and "Hiring" Ministers

There is no Scripture for a church choosing its "minister," or clergyman, or, in other words, the sheep choosing their shepherd. The Lord gave, and the Church received. A church (or assembly) has no right to "choose" which of God's gifts it will accept. This was how sectarianism began at Corinth. Some preferred Paul, some Apollos, and others Peter. Not contented to receive all the gifts, they selected those whom they esteemed best; and, while outwardly one, they were divided in heart. Some have, with singular boldness, contended that Christians have as much right to choose their "ministers" as they have to select their physicians or lawyers. Scripture gives no countenance to such a thought. Acts 6 is often quoted in support of the theory, but it is to be observed that "the seven" selected were not chosen to teach or preach, but to "serve tables." Their functions were temporal, not spiritual. Surely there is a vast difference between taking charge of money and taking oversight of souls! It is not the case of one "elected" to minister the Word (the ministry of the Word and the serving of tables being contrasted, verse 2). Though the Church chose them at the command of

the apostles, they were set apart for their special service by the twelve. Believers are exhorted to "know" them that labour among them (1 Thess. 5. 12, 13), to "salute," "remember," and "obey" them (Hebrews 13. 7, 17, 24), but never to "elect," "choose," or "appoint" them.

Servants of Christ should be known, not by official badges, titles, or clerical costumes, but by their work. That there are God-gifted "teachers," "evangelists," and "pastors," in the various sects we freely and frankly admit. They are so, however, not by virtue of human ordination or educational acquirements. A good tailor is known by the quality of the work done by him. In the same way are those known who are divinely called "evangelists," "pastors," and "teachers." And though colleges, presbyteries, synods, bishops, or conferences appoint men to offices, Christians are not bound to own such as called of God for the special service, unless they have the qualifications specified in Scripture (see 1 Thess. 5. 12, 13; Heb. 13. 17).

The custom of preachers hiring themselves to men for so much a year is most unscriptural and reprehensible. Buying, bargaining, and selling, in relation to ministry in the Church of God, must be wrong. Think of the Apostle Paul hiring himself to the Corinthians at a fixed salary! "The labourer is worthy of his hire." "Hire" should be translated "reward" to be consistent with other passages. Misthos is the Greek word. "Great is your reward (misthos) in Heaven" (Matt. 5. 12; Mark 9. 41). If a preacher is "hired" by men he is their servant, and, of course, will look to his "masters" for his "pay." If his preaching does not please his hearers (most of whom may be unconverted) he will soon find out that it is advisable for him to obtain a "call" from some other

congregation. It is blessedly true that God has ordained that "they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel" (1 Cor. 9. 14); and those whom the Lord has fitted, called, and sent forth to preach the Gospel will have their need supplied without recourse being had to unscriptural means. Servants of Christ should look to the Lord alone to support them. If the "hire" were stopped, those who are merely "hirelings" would soon be weeded out. If, however, servants of Christ cannot trust Him to supply their need, let them seek some honest occupation by which they can earn their daily bread.

The various sects are largely helped by contributions from the unconverted. Every imaginable scheme is set afoot to raise funds to support "the cause." Church entertainments, socials, fairs, festivals, scientific lectures, suppers, picnics, moonlight excursions, concerts, raffles, readings, amateur theatricals, and bazaars, are got up with the object of squeezing money out of the pockets of unconverted men and women to pay the preacher's salary, or remove the debt from the "house of God."

> "*Fair and festival, frolics untold, are held in the house of prayer,*
> *And maidens, bewitching as Syrens of old, with worldly graces rare,*
> *Invent the very cunningest tricks, untrammelled by Gospel or laws,*
> *To beguile, and amuse, and win from the world, some help for the righteous cause*."

No wonder that an infidel remarked to a Presbyterian minister "I think your God must be in great need of money, by the tricks the churches practice to get it for

Him." The whole system of church support by amusements and entertainments is of the world. Satan claims a mortgage on all institutions which his servants help to support. If Christians go "down to Egypt" by asking help from the unsaved to carry on the work of the Lord, they need not be surprised that worldlings will expect to have some control in the management of their church affairs. The living and eternal God is not impoverished. He who supported a whole nation for forty years in a barren wilderness can surely sustain those whom He has called and qualified for His service without their having recourse to begging money from the unsaved. His own words are, "Taking nothing of the Gentiles" (3 John 6-8).

## Ordination

Nowhere do we find in the New Testament that Christians were "ordained" or set apart by men to teach or preach excepting the house of Stephanas, who "addicted" or, as the word is elsewhere rendered, "ordained" themselves to the ministry of the saints (1 Cor. 16. 15). Apostles and their delegates ordained or set apart elders or bishops, but neither of these classes was ordained to preach or teach.* That those among them who were fitted to teach or preach exercised their gift is granted, but they were not ordained for such purposes. A bishop or elder was a ruler or overseer, but not necessarily a preacher or teacher. 1 Timothy 5. 17 clearly proves this: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in word and doctrine." This Scripture shows that there were elders who did not labour in word and doctrine; proving that they were not ordained for

preaching or teaching. If they had been ordained for the purpose of preaching or teaching all of them would have done so. In each assembly there was a plurality of elders or bishops. Such were not ordained by churches, bishops, or arch-bishops, but by apostles, or their representatives.

* Many have been misled by the notes at the end of Titus and 2 Timothy. It is enough to say that such are not in the Greek text, and are omitted in the Revised Version.

Preachers ordain "ministers" and "elders" by putting their hands on their heads in imitation of the apostles. One of the texts usually quoted in support of the ordination of "ministers" and elders is 1 Timothy 4. 14: "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." But 2 Timothy 1. 6, "Stir up the gift of God which is in thee by the putting on of my hands" shows us that a special "gift" was granted to Timothy by prophecy by the laying on of the Apostle's hands. The "presbytery" did not impart the gift; they were simply associated with the apostle in the act. Is any "gift" now bestowed on a preacher at his ordination? "Ordination grace is imparted," said a minister to us recently. What sort of grace is that? Acts 13. 3 affords us another example of laying on of hands, but not of ordaining. It is simply a case of expression of fellowship with Paul and Barnabas, who were going forth on a special errand. They had been preaching for years previous to this, and it is not likely that the brethren at Antioch supposed that they were ordaining the Apostle Paul. We ask those who ordain men to the ministry, Where is your authority? That apostles ordained, it is evident. "Titus ordained elders." True, but he was commissioned by an apostle to

do so. What authority has the Church to ordain? Is there any body of men on earth that has that power now? IF SO, LET THEM PRODUCE THEIR CREDENTIALS!

If some godly "laymen" (so called) ordained one of their number to preach the Gospel, the "clergy" would not likely recognize such an one. But where did the clergy obtain their authority? Do they believe in apostolic succession?* If not, where did they obtain authority to ordain? The Church of Scotland, in 1560, renounced ordination by imposition of hands as a "superstition," and eighteen years later they restored it (see Beverley on "Ministry," page 4). Ordaining is always spoken of in connection with "elders." Nowhere in Scripture do we read of "pastors" being ordained. "This was evidently felt to be a difficulty in the denominations, but it was got over by calling the pastor a 'teaching elder.' By changing his name they have managed to preserve ordination, which seemingly, must be preserved at any cost." Apostles and their delegates had authority to ordain, but none others.

* "The bishops, with the priests present, shall lay their hands severally upon every one that receiveth the order of priesthood, the bishop saying, 'Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive they are forgiven, and whose sins thou dost retain they are retained.'" (Book of Common Prayer—Church of England —"The Ordering of Priests.") This is unadulterated Popery.

## "You Are Also a Sect"

It is asserted by some that Christians who seek to carry out the principles we have enunciated, are "as much a sect as any other." If sects are condemned in Scripture, are believers compelled to disobey the Lord? The Greek word rendered "sect" in the Authorised Version of the New Testament is the word "hairesis" (see Acts 15. 1; Acts 24. 5; Acts 26. 5; Acts 28. 22). Writing to the Corinthians, the Apostle says, "For there must be also heresies amongst you" ("hairesis," 1 Cor. 11. 19, "sects"). Among the "works of the flesh" mentioned in Gal. 5 are adultery, fornication, "heresies" or "sects" ("hairesis"). "Denomination," as one has observed, "is a specious word invented by shame to conceal the nakedness of the fall of Christendom. That which erring and bewildered Christians call 'denomination' is in Scripture called 'schism' (see Greek in 1 Cor. 1. 10-12; 12. 25, 'schismata'), so that whatever we may now hear concerning 'denominations' (that is, sects and schisms), and however these divisions may now be applauded and admired, and however much it may be a fashionable virtue to speak well of them all, yet this is certain, if there be any truth in the Word of God, every 'sect' is a sin and every division is a proof of disobedience. 'There is one body' (Eph. 4. 4) is a truth in the Word of God; to speak of 'various denominations' is but after all saying that there are various 'schisms,' for Christ and His church have but one name (1 Cor. 12. 12), one body (Eph. 5. 29, 30), and one Spirit" (1 Cor. 6. 17).

If "schism" in the body of Christ is sin; if divisions are to be avoided, surely there must be a remedy. Was the multiplication of churches in apostolic times the

multiplication of sects? Assuredly not. If, then, Christians, however few their number, go back to the rock-fast position in the Scripture, gathering to the name of the Lord, receiving those whom He has received, owning no sectarian name, or terms of fellowship, are they thereby constituted a sect?

## Position and Condition

It is freely admitted that a right church position does not necessarily secure a right spiritual condition. It is quite possible for Christians in a scriptural position to become sectarian in heart and ways. Naturally, we are all sectarians and greatly need "largeness of heart" (1 Kings 4. 29) to walk in the narrow pathway of obedience. The late Mr. Henry Groves has said that "a wrong condition, which is inward, is even more defiling to the soul and more injurious to spiritual life than a wrong position, which is outward. We can praise God for the unsectarian condition of soul of so many who are still held in the bonds of a sectarian position whilst we mourn over the sectarian condition of some who boast of an unsectarian position."

It has been well said that "A sect founded on knowledge is the worst of all sects." Church fellowship ought not to be limited by any measure of attainment in knowledge or faith. As long as the Church is on earth there will be differences of judgment among Christians. But differences of judgment on minor points ought to be no barrier to fellowship. It is the determination not to tolerate such differences that is the source of many schisms. If Christians would remember that "things that are equally true are not equally important, and things that are equally false are not equally fatal," there would

be fewer divisions. Mr. Groves, in an admirable booklet entitled "Schism and its Cure," says some strong things about sectarianism: "Whilst sectarianism has various forms it exhibits two characteristics," he remarks, "(1) It demands as a title for fellowship, the recognition of things not contained in the Word of God; or (2), while making the Word the basis of fellowship, it requires an understanding of, and submission to, truths, which God has not made essential to fellowship. In the former case the Word is virtually set aside as God's all-sufficient guide, and in the latter the Word wrongly used is made the occasion of schism . . . The second description of sectarianism is more seductive. Accepting the Bible only as the rule of faith, it is not content with those fundamentals of truth which God has made the basis of fellowship and on which He would have us build one another up, but it binds the conscience on things in which God would have each one responsible to his own Lord. This sets aside the ground, common to all saints, on which the father in Christ and the babe in Christ stand together. The practical, though not the intentional, result is, the spirit which finds expression in the words, 'Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou'" (Isa. 65. 5).

Mr. R. M. Henty of Belfast, an ex-Baptist minister, on his deathbed said to an old friend of ours, "Good-bye, dear brother! May God help you in endeavouring to keep the door of the Gospel open to all sinners, and the door of the church open to all saints." Well would it be for all of us if we remembered the words of a great and a good man:—"I have a whole Christ for my salvation; the whole Bible for my soul's instruction and guidance; the whole Church of God for my fellowship; the whole of the

Spirit's ministry in it; the whole world for my parish, that I may be a true catholic and never become sectarian."

The following words from a beloved brother now with the Lord are worth remembering: "While there are many things that call for humiliation among the assemblies of believers scripturally gathered, we do not hold these things, or teach them to others as part of the mind of God. Do you say you have found pride, worldliness, self-seeking, and a score more of grievous things among such assemblies? Be it so: I dare not deny it. But are these things declared to be pleasing to God, and made an essential part of the principle of our coming together? This is what is continually overlooked. The unscriptural practices in the various sects of Christendom are vital parts of their systems. They are upheld, and taught, and justified, and those who belong to the sects are therefore upholders of its evils. Another authority is made to override that of the Word of God, and that Word is made of none effect through man's traditions. It is not the persons we are separating from, but the false principles and the denial to the Lord Jesus of His place of absolute authority in His own house. A young man once asked how things were going on in a certain gathering. I had to tell him of grievous troubles and even divisions. 'And do you call that godly order?' he asked. 'No, I do not,' was my reply, 'but neither did Paul call the condition of things at Corinth godly order. Yet he never suggested that they should leave off simply gathering around the Lord and adopt some human device instead, to keep up at least the outward appearance of order'" ("Position and Condition," by Alfred J. Holiday, The Witness, 1887).

## Common Objections

"I admit that there are numbers in our church fellowship who make no profession of being converted: should I not, however, remain in it and try to put things right?" God's Word does not sanction continuance in unscriptural positions, even though the motive be to "do good." If "sects" are condemned by God, should believers uphold that which is displeasing to Him? Many Christians are hindered from acting out the truth of God through the subtle, satanic snare that they can "do more good" in the circle where they move. They have so many "opportunities" of "doing good," and if they renounced "membership" of unscriptural ecclesiastical systems, their "influence would be lessened and their usefulness impaired." Samuel's words to Saul should be prayerfully pondered by such: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15. 22).

Believers are not responsible for the results of their service. The business of the Christian should be to please the Lord in all things, at all times, under all circumstances, and at all costs. The highest success (as one has well remarked) is pleasing God. Of the Lord Himself it is written: "I have laboured in vain, I have spent My strength for naught, and in vain, yet surely My judgment is with the Lord, and My work with My God" (Isa. 49. 4). Much that now passes current among men as "successful" service will, at the judgment seat of Christ, be found to be but "wood, hay, and stubble" (1 Cor. 3. 12). The commendation bestowed by the Lord on the servant (Matt. 25. 23) was not, "Well done, popular

and successful servant," but "Well done, good and faithful servant."

"Go where you can do most good." "Stay where you can be of most use." Such are the exhortations given to young believers. Through such unscriptural teaching, earnest Christian workers are so thoroughly prejudiced against the truth that they are not prepared to do God's will.

"I would come into fellowship if Mr. So-and-So were settled amongst you." If so you would not "come out" to the Lord; you would come out to Mr. So-and-So. If he went elsewhere on his Master's errands you would most probably return to the sect you "liked best," or go where you would be "best fed." If all the believers in the village where you reside gathered simply to the name of the Lord, you would have the benefit of all the "gifts" in the gathering; if however, they disobey Christ and continue in sectarian positions, should their failure cause you to reject God's principles? Assuredly not. If only two believers gathered on New Testament principles where we reside, surely our place ought to be with them. The promise is, "Where two or three are gathered together in ('unto' Greek) My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18. 19, 20). The path of obedience is a narrow one. Obedience in a past dispensation generally brought temporal blessings, but the obedience of faith in the present dispensation brings trial and tribulation, more or less. Many who rejoice in "the gift of God" referred to in Romans 6. 23 do not so fully appreciate the "gift" spoken of in Philippians 1. 29, "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him but also to suffer for His sake." Those who make it their

business to follow the Lord in the path of separation, may expect persecution.

## Acting Out the Truth

In seeking to act out God's truth you may count on opposition. Every conceivable objection will be placed in your way by worldly and religious people to keep you from following Christ. The fewness of numbers of those gathering simply in the Lord's name, the feebleness of testimony, the lack of gifted teachers, the absence of persons of position or culture, will be pressed into service. You will again and again be informed and reminded that your "influence" will be injured, and your "usefulness" hindered. Your self-conceit and "opinionativeness" in daring to imagine that you "know better" than gifted "Divines" will be proclaimed. Friends whom you expect to help you in carrying out the truth of God will oppose. You will be looked upon with suspicion and distrust, and from pulpit, platform, and press, people will be put on their guard and advised to shun you. You will be told of trouble caused in households through the reception of the truth. There is, however, nothing strange in that. The truth of God does separate. The Lord Jesus said: "I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's foes shall be they of his own household" (Matt. 10. 35-37). Whatsoever the Lord Jesus commands you, do it, irrespective of consequences. Many who greatly delight to expatiate on the "Whosoever" of John 3. 16, are not so much concerned about the "Whatsoever" of John 2. 5, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."

If you do not come out to the Lord, and to the Lord alone; if you take the place of separation for the sake of gifted brethren, or because you were converted through their instrumentality, or on account of misunderstandings with some in the denomination you left, you will soon return. The path of rejection with Christ is trying to the flesh, and when difficulties present themselves in scriptural assemblies some who have learned truth merely from men's lives or books have neither the patience nor the grace to face the difficulties. Christians and companies of Christians may fail in carrying out God's principles, but the principles continue unchanged. Don't be afraid of "difficulties" or "consequences." Don't allow the thought of your "usefulness" or "influence" to stand between you and following the Lord fully. Be "faithful," and leave "results" with Him.

A dairyman in a town in Scotland was greatly exercised about taking his place with a small company of believers. Strong pressure was brought to bear upon him to prevent his doing so. The principal "reason" assigned was that his customers would cease purchasing his milk. "Then by the grace of God," said he, "I will sell my cows." Brave soldier of the Cross! Christians who are prepared to follow the Lord wholly, and if necessary to suffer all earthly loss, are much required in these time-serving days. "Jelly-fish" Christians—men without backbone—never trouble the devil, and are not of much use in the service of God. David's men said to him in a time of great perplexity, "Behold thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint" (2 Samuel 15. 15). Having taken a right Church position, keep in a right condition of soul, and God will own and

bless you. Be it your constant delight to please Him. "Let us go forth unto Him without the camp bearing His reproach" (Heb. 13. 13); let us "abide in Him, that when He shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (1 John 2. 28). Our blessed Lord is coming! His own precious words are, "Behold I come quickly" (Rev. 22. 7). May we "occupy" till He come! "For yet a very little while, He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry" (Heb. 10. 37, R. V.)

"*A little while, 'twill soon be past,*
*Why should we shun the shame and Cross?*
*O let us in His footsteps haste,*
*Counting for Him all else but loss;*
*O how will recompense His smile,*
*The sufferings of this little while.*"