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# PRINCIPLES OF TRUTH

ON

THE PRESENT STATE OF THE CHURCH,

ADDRESSED TO

**Christians of all Denominations,**

ALSO

REASONS FOR RETIRING FROM THE INDEPENDENT  
OR CONGREGATIONAL BODY, AND FROM  
ISLINGTON CHAPEL.

BY

**W. H. DORMAN,**

LATE MINISTER OF ISLINGTON CHAPEL.

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Speaking the truth in love.—EPH. iv. 15.

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**ERRATUM.**

**Page 40, line 2, for "churches," read "church."**

## INTRODUCTION.

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WHATEVER judgment may be formed by others on the subjects that are treated of in these pages, I can assuredly say, they are not with me matters of speculation, or of hastily formed opinion ; but the definite and entirely *practical* conclusions of my own mind, long and deeply exercised upon the Word of God, and anxiously desiring to be led into the simplicity of truth, and obedience to the will of God. It is not at all needful to carry any one along the painful course of mental and moral discipline,—the doubts and questionings, the fears and trials, the hesitations and conflicts,—through which the Lord is constrained, from their waywardness, to lead some of his children to the discovery and practice of his revealed will. For sure I am, that our path would be much less thorny and perplexed were it not for the pride of our hearts, and our carnal reasonings in the things of God, and our extreme reluctance to walk in the simplicity of faith, with the Word of our Heavenly Father only and his promised Spirit as our guide. It is

a delightful truth for the child of God to rest upon, "If thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light;" and, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and *it shall be given him.*" And, that the light may not be obscured in his walk, nor the heavenly wisdom be bestowed in vain, as to his practical judgments and the direction of his course, he has this principle of an inspired apostle, "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood,"—for, "we walk by faith, not by sight." Leaving, then, the path which I have travelled in the pursuit of truth to the judgment of Him who has witnessed all its intricacies and windings, and endeavouring entirely to forget myself, it has been my desire to place before the mind the definite truth of God's word upon each of the subjects on which I have been led to speak; for to this authority alone our souls should bow, and by this standard alone must *every* question that can agitate a Christian's mind, be tried. It is my desire, that whatever the Lord has enabled me to present for the service of his church, may be calmly judged by believers in Christ in every denomination (to the world, in these matters, I make no appeal); and, that it may be strictly tried by the only unchanging and unerring standard and test of the truth—the written Word of God: for assuredly the principal questions here brought under review are of common concern to the whole Church of

God, and ought to awaken the prayerful inquiry of every disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ ; for, as we shall all be judged by God's Word at *last*, it is manifest that our only safe position is, through the grace of God, to judge ourselves, and all we do, by it *now*. Plainly, as a servant of Christ, and with the clearly-expressed will of my Master in my hand, I can have nothing to do, while judging of truth and duty, with any inquiries about their accordance, or otherwise, with the received and cherished systems of men. My only guide is the fully-declared mind of Christ ; for it is a thing beyond all question to a child of God, that wherever, or with whomsoever, he may stand, he cannot be in a right position, unless he have with him, unequivocally, the mind and approbation of his Father and his God. Some of the points, indeed, claim the more particular attention of Christians amongst the Independents, with whom I have been associated from my earliest days ; and connected with whom, as a body, I have sustained the office of a pastor during a period of nine years. And more especially still do I address myself, on some matters, to Christian brethren at Islington Chapel, where I have, during the last three years, as the Lord enabled me, "laboured in word and in doctrine;" and of the most of whom I may say, with humble confidence, "If I be not a pastor to others, yet doubtless I am to you ; for the seal of my pastorship are ye in the Lord," having gathered you in the Lord

through the ministry of His Word. This (to me the most beloved) part of the flock of God, must not for a moment imagine that, because they are mentioned *last*, any disparagement of their interests or importance is intended; for indeed I have named them in this order, simply because, in point of numbers, they form the narrowest of the three concentric circles in which it is my desire and hope that, as God shall please, the truths and principles I am called to present may circulate.

## CHAPTER I.

### PRINCIPLES OF TRUTH, CLAIMING THE ATTENTION OF CHRISTIANS OF EVERY DENOMINATION.

I ADDRESS myself to Christians of all denominations, or rather to Christians simply, without regarding their sectarian distinctions; but in doing so, I am far from thinking that the principles I am stating will act *corporately*, or upon *bodies* of men, great or small, in any section of the professing church, in its present much divided and distracted state. God can give what effect he pleases to the testimony of his truth; and he often does give an effect but little expected by his children. Still I do not, in my own mind, anticipate any great effect from what I am called to write, upon any but *individual* enquiring minds. The *power of conscience* is not diffused through organized bodies, or associations of men, but dwells in the insulated mind alone. And thus, if at all, it must, by the presentation of the truth, be met:—"by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every *man's* conscience, in the sight of God." And I do believe, before the Lord, that this appeal, however feeble in itself, will not be made in vain to the hearts and consciences of the children of God that are at the present hour so painfully separated from one another,



and scattered abroad throughout the various divisions into which the spirit of *carnality* has rent the one Church of God (1 Cor. iii. 3, 4). Well do I know, that many are daily weeping in the bitterness of their souls over the present low, divided, and jarring state of the Church in this country, and sighing for a return to "a more excellent way." Doubtless there are many persons of true piety in every denomination of professing Christians, that care very little about *abstract principles*, as long as they continue mere *abstractions*, which is too often the case; yet who feel, to the grief of their souls, the working of practical evil, and would fain deliver themselves from its deadly and deadening power. Many, very many, there are who cannot find any rest for their souls in the existing ecclesiastical systems and arrangements, either in the Establishment, or among the Dissenters, because they cannot find any thing like true pastorship or spiritual oversight in their most approved ministers;\* nor the most distant approach to any thing like "the communion

\* It may save circumlocution, as well as give definiteness to my meaning, if I say, once for all, I employ the term "*minister*" in its popular sense. Its definite and proper meaning is simply *servant*, and its being used to designate exclusively those who "preach the word," is a most unscriptural limitation of the term. The term *ministry*, in the Church of God, is now applied almost entirely to preaching; whereas in the Word of God there is no service in the Church that is not designated by this term. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit: and there are differences of ministries, but the same Lord" (1 Cor. xii. 4, 5). The ministry of the Evangelist is quite distinct from the ministry of the Pastor, and the ministry of "ruling" in the Church is (or may be) distinct from both. Evidently, in apostolic times, it was not necessarily connected with the ministry of the Word at all; as we learn from 1 Tim. v. 17, "Let the *elders* that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, *especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.*"

of saints” amongst those with whom they are outwardly joined in the professed fellowship of the Gospel; nor scarcely any of the fruits of love in the spirit and walk of those who are called “brethren in Christ.” But what is religion without *love*? What, emphatically, is the religion of *Christ* without love? “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (1 John iv. 7, 8). “He that loveth not his brother (his *Christian* brother) abideth in death” (1 John iii. 14).

In speaking these things, I desire to be understood as referring to systems, and their practical working, rather than to the *men* who are connected with them. For I do not know that I have a controversy with any man on earth; certainly not with any man—especially not with any Christian—apart from the principles he holds. If his principles are in accordance with the word of God, I desire to be entirely one with him; if they appear to me to be contrary to that word, I must at all risk and hazard refuse, and, as the Lord may help me, oppose them.

The feelings of restlessness and dissatisfaction, to which I have alluded as experienced by Christians in connexion with the existing state of things in the professing church, and of which I have been made largely to partake myself, are by no means confined to the people as distinguished from their ministers. For there is no one who has enjoyed in any degree the confidence of brethren in the ministry that has not known something of the deep sorrow of heart, and the painful anxiety with which the most spiritual amongst them contemplate the present state of

things around them; and also the forebodings that are experienced when viewing the steady, but rapid rising, on every hand, of the waters of change and convulsion, and the *pointing* of the present movements of society, in their apprehended bearing on the interests of religion and the Church of God. The most sanguine of the ministers, however, with whom I have been associated (I mean the ministers of Independent churches) do indeed expect that the shock which has been recently given to dissent (to *nominal* dissent at least) through the agitation of the question of Establishments and "Voluntaryism," will, in the course of a few years, be recovered, through the evangelical clergy going into "high church" principles,\* and the pious part of their flocks seeking, as heretofore, for simplicity of worship and communion amongst the Dissenters.

There is also another ground of hope, that through the prevalence of what are termed "liberal principles," in politics, many will ultimately be brought to unite in their *religious* associations with the men who are like-minded in the principles of their political creed, rather than with those by whom they are politically opposed. Whether these expectations are likely to be realized; or whether there is any basis, in truth, for these hopes or not; or

\* Which in fact are the principles of Popery. And, indeed, the whole mass of the Establishment seems to be fast verging into the errors of the Papacy; while the worldliness of the Dissenters and their keen pursuit after political influence and importance, but too surely mark their tendency and progress, as a body, toward the liberalism and infidelity, that, in conjunction with Popery, will soon assume an unmasked ascendancy in our land. I, of course, except individuals of worth and piety, who are known to me; and many more whom I do not know.

whether, if they were realized to their fullest extent, it could be deemed a favourable augury for the cause of religion and the true Church of God, may admit of serious doubt. All that I would trust myself to say on the point is, I *wish* I could think that Independency, or any other portion of the dissenting body, were so in accordance with the Word of God, and so under the guidance of the Spirit of God, in its principles and practice, as to warrant the *hope* of its becoming an asylum, or ark of safety, for souls fleeing out of Babylon, and escaping from the deluge of worldliness, which is on all sides pouring in upon every section of the professing church. In speaking these things of the Dissenters, and especially of the Independents, I would be very far from supplying arguments against them to be employed by the advocates of Establishments. For I deem, most certainly, from the Word of God, that the Ecclesiastical Establishment of this country is an entirely *worldly* system, bearing a religious name. Of the Church of England, *as a system*, it may with truth be affirmed, that the church is the world, and the world is the church. And that is all I wish to say about it, except that I sincerely love all the saints of God connected with it, and wish them in a safer and more simple position; where, in dissociation from evil, and separatedness from the world, they may be "like unto men that *wait* for their Lord."

If the question now before the Church of God were a mere question of ceremonies, such as the wearing or not wearing a gown, the preaching from a pulpit or otherwise, or some matter of mere outward arrangement, *I*, at least, should feel quite disposed to hold my tongue.

But when the question is whether man's order and appointment shall carry it over the order and the power of the Holy Ghost in the Church, then, I say, I am no longer permitted to be silent. And this, and nothing less than this, is the question at issue in the present day. It is just, whether man's wisdom and authority shall rule in the Church, or whether the Holy Spirit shall be permitted to regulate and order those things which Christ, in his absence from his disciples, has committed to the hands of the Spirit, as that "other Comforter which shall abide with them for ever." Certainly the whole matter connects itself with the office and operations of the Holy Ghost in the Church, and also with the authority and sufficiency of the word of God. I would now speak more especially a word on the office and operations of the Holy Spirit. We all know there has been, of late years, professedly, much prayer for the *influences* of the Holy Spirit.\* And I can understand, there is an operation of the Holy Ghost, which brings the soul to Christ, that may be called the *influence* of the Spirit; for by his operation, assuredly, it is, and not by any inducements of nature, that poor sinners receive those "exceeding great and precious promises whereby we become partakers of the Divine nature," and thus experience the commencement of a new and spiritual life. But I apprehend we are in danger of error if we use the term "influence" to designate some expected, outward operation of the Spirit, which like the rain or dew must

\* The only place in which I find the term "influences" occurring in the word of God, is in the book of Job xxxviii. 31, "Canst thou bind the sweet *influences* of the Pleiades?"

come down from heaven, rather than the energy of the Holy Ghost *dwelling* in the Church as the promised, abiding Comforter. All the operations of the Holy Spirit, subsequent to his drawing our souls to Christ, both in the individual believer, and collectively in the Church, appear, in the word of God, to be connected with his *personal presence*. For instance, the promise of Christ to the Church, which is also "the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me," is, (John xiv. 16) "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may *abide with you for ever*; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but *ye know him*; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be *in you*." And in verse 26, "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."\*

But beyond this, I see the *personal*, or actual *indwelling* of the Holy Ghost, is presented in the Scriptures in the strongest forms, as the distinguished privilege and honor of *every* (even the weakest and most despised) believer in Christ. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God *dwelleth* in you? If any

\* I suppose I need hardly apply to these quotations the inspired Canon that, "no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation." For if *all the principles* of Divine truth remain not with us, as the imperishable inheritance and the inalienable treasure of the Church; then do we need a *new revelation* to tell us which parts of the Scripture have become obsolete, and with which, therefore, we have nothing to do; and also what parts remain that we may take for our present comfort and guidance in the things of God.

man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy" (1 Cor. iii. 16, 17). "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, *in you*, which ye have of God?" (1 Cor. vi. 19). "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God *dwell* in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. viii. 9); and again, verse 11, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead *dwell* in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that *dwell*eth in you."

Now, *assuming* (and it is not much to assume) that Christ spoke the *truth*, when he said, "I will pray the Father, and he *shall* give you another Comforter, that he may *abide with you for ever*, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive" (John xiv. 16); and also taking for granted that God, by the Holy Ghost, speaks *truly*, when he says (2 Cor. vi. 16), "I will *dwell* in them and walk in them," and (1 Cor. iii. 16) "the Spirit of God *dwell*eth in you," I do assuredly conclude, that the blessing now required by the Church of God is *not* a new baptism of the Spirit (for the Spirit has never been withdrawn; grieved he may have been, but he *abides* still with the Church) but a simple recognition of His presence, and authority, and gifts in the Church; and that, in the person of each believer, and in the aggregate of believers, or the Church, he may be allowed an unrestrained and unhindered control and operation. That Church is no Church at all, where the Spirit of God dwells not; and that Christian is no Christian at all, who is not a temple of the Holy Ghost, and is not led by

the Spirit. For in the one case God has said of the Church, "Ye are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephes. ii. 22); and in the other, "If any *man* have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," and "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 9, 14). The *abiding* presence of the Holy Spirit with the Church then being assumed (I choose this position rather than for a moment admit the *thought* that the distinct promise of "the faithful and true witness" has failed), I see this clear statement of His rightful supremacy in the Church during the personal absence of Christ. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, *dividing to every man severally as he will*. For, as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are *one body*: so also is Christ (1 Cor. xii. 4—12, and to the end of the chapter). Now I see this double wrong done to the Spirit of all grace, by that which almost universally



obtains at present in the professing Church—the *shutting up* in the narrow and faulty channel of man's office and appointment, his gifts and operations in the Church. First, the Spirit is grieved and hindered in the persons of true believers; because the possession of gift always creates *responsibility*; but there is no scope left for its exercise where all exercise of gift (except prayer) is assumed to belong exclusively to the *ministry*, as it is termed. And, secondly, He is hindered in his operations in the Church; since however richly His gifts may have been bestowed on those who are termed by one section of professors the "*laity*," and by another, "private Christians" (both distinctions are utterly unscriptural) they are of no practical avail to the Church, unless they have received the stamp of *man's authority*, and fall into the channel of *man's* appointment to office. Thus is the Spirit hindered and grieved, the Church weakened and destroyed, and the ultimate tendency of the whole is to exclude the Spirit and his operations altogether. I speak it with the firmest conviction of its truth, though with great sorrow of heart, that the present system of things, whether amongst Churchmen or Dissenters, would go on much smoother and better *without* the Spirit of God than with it. I would not apply this remark, in its fullest extent, to the conversion of sinners, —although the work of conversion is too little cared for apart from sectarian feeling, or beyond the limits (there are exceptions) of certain ecclesiastical buildings. But in a most unqualified sense do I say, that the gifts of the Spirit to any of the children of God, besides those who by man have been appointed to office and ministry,

can be productive of nothing but sorrow and dissatisfaction to their own hearts ; and nothing but derangement and trouble in that system of order and machinery which man, without warrant or authority from Christ, has dared to set up in the Church ; the quiet and orderly working of which is practically received by the professing Church as a substitute for the life and energy of the Holy Ghost. An apostle, or even Jesus Christ himself, with the full power of heavenly truth and perfect knowledge of the mind of God, *could* not be admitted to minister in the churches of the Establishment, because he never was episcopally ordained. Satan, if he were thus ordained, *could* minister, but Christ—I speak it with entire reverence of soul—unordained *could not* : and assuredly into the pulpits of the Dissenters he *would* not be permitted to enter, if he should arraign their spirit and principles, and declare their fondly-cherished order to be contrary to the Scriptures and the mind of God.\*

\* I do not at all speak this invidiously, with regard to any true-hearted ministers of Jesus Christ, or children of God connected with any of these systems, but I speak it merely against the systems, as involving this sad and awful inconsistency ; for I am sure it will appear a most monstrous thing to every simple-hearted Christian, that any systems or arrangements of men should exist, in what professes to be the Church of God, that would shut out from any ministration in it, the very head of the Church, even “Christ, who is the head of the Church and the Saviour of the body.” And that I have not overstated the case, one moment’s consideration will prove. For it is just a *fact*, that without subscribing the Articles, and without the ordination of a Bishop, the Lord Jesus Christ himself could find no place of ministry in the Establishment ; nor amongst the Dissenters, without some previous collegiate training, or, at least, without the choice of the people.

I dwell the longer on the injury done to the Spirit by a departure from scriptural simplicity, and through man's usurped authority in that province where he has no right nor power but merely to obey, because I feel that the presence of the Holy Ghost *in* the Church, and with believers on earth, is as much a matter of faith with me as Christ's dying for our sins, and his ascension into heaven: for, as we have seen, the very same authority which induces us to receive the one, has declared the other. I do see, therefore, that for believers to be praying for the Holy Ghost *to be given* to them, or to the Church, is nothing short of direct unbelief; and is a virtual denial that Christ's emphatic promise of the Spirit has been accomplished to the Church. I can quite understand the prayer, that God would stir up the *energies* of the Holy Spirit in his children, and in the Church; but I cannot understand the prayer of a believer for the *bestowment* of the Holy Spirit. It is nothing better than an exhibition of direct unbelief; since God has expressly said, "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost in you, which ye have of God:" and, "Ye are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." And Christ has declared, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you (John xvi. 7).

Another most painful thing that is found to press with peculiar weight at this time upon the minds of the devout and simple-hearted disciples of Christ, which is also the taunt of the infidel and the scoff of the world, is the endless division, and the utterly sectarian aspect of the professing Church. How sad a con-

trast in this respect is presented to that oneness amongst all his disciples, which constituted the chief burden of Christ's intercessory prayer, and was so sweetly exhibited after the day of Pentecost, when "the multitude of them that believed were of *one heart and of one soul.*" But in speaking of the unity of the Church, I mean its **VISIBLE** unity, for the world can see no other; I do not for a moment contemplate or desire a union or coalition of religious sects, since their corporate sectarianism must be for ever at variance with the simple principles of *Christian* unity and "the communion of saints." Individual believers from every sect may be united in holy love and fellowship one with another, while they look only at the one grand uniting bond in which they all agree,—love to Jesus and redemption by his blood: but the moment they think of their sectarian distinctions, their communion ceases and their unity is at an end. Their distinctive differences must, and will, while they are maintained, ever operate to keep each sect and party in a state of separation, if not in a state of hostility, in relation to every other. But what *right* have Christians to form themselves into sects and parties? Is not the *root* of all division and party spirit in the Church of God to be found in carnality? For "while one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not *carnal*?" Is it then a matter to be gloried in, that carnality has so thoroughly inwoven itself with every part of the professing Church, that if it were withdrawn, it would be the withdrawal of the main source of its life and activity and energy, in the things professedly of God? Alas! brethren, if the Holy Ghost has said, "Whereas

there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not *carnal*, and walk as men?" shall we, by upholding any sectarian distinction, determine, as far as we are concerned, that this bitter root shall remain to poison with its fruits the Church of God? or shall we say, it is impossible that Christians should now, as in former days, be "of one heart and one soul," and known only by the common name of Christians, or brethren in Christ? Whoever may say so, whether of pastors or flock, my prayer to the Lord is, that the spirit (I speak of the *spirit* only) whence the unclean thought proceeds may be left *alone* in the deserted frame-work of the sectarianism which has gendered it, without light, or heat, or refreshment to sustain it; withering in its own desolate house of unbelief, where the Spirit of the Lord and the great Head of the Church cannot dwell, till it has lost all power to harm any of the least of the children of God. For *what*, I would ask, is it which hinders Christians from being of one heart and one soul? Is it any thing but their sin? Is it not to the dishonour of their common Father, to the wounding of their common Saviour, and to the grief of the one indwelling and uniting Spirit, that the members of the one redeemed family are found (and are contented to be so found, and saying it cannot be otherwise) in a state of separation and alienation from one another, and refusing to meet one another at the family table of their elder Brother, who hath said, "One is your Father in heaven, and all ye are brethren;" and, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another?"

As I have said, I do not contemplate nor desire a

union of religious sects, as *sects*, so, I would add, I as little contemplate or desire a union of *persons* who are not sincere lovers of Christ, and who do not "hold the Head." To a Socinian, for example, I could have nothing to say, but "You have denied the Lord that bought you;" and with the only bond that can unite *Christians* together—love to Jesus as the only begotten Son of God, and fellowship in his death and resurrection—you can have nothing to do." But as it is the judgment of almost all that profess Christ (I suppose it is the admitted judgment of *all*), that there are children of God in every opposing section of the professing Church, I do say, the New Testament presents no reason, but the contrary, why all might not be united in a *present visible* unity with one another, in Christ, before an ungodly and scoffing world. It is not enough to tell the world we *are* one in *spirit* now! When will the world believe this? It knows too well what are the *visible fruits* and efforts of those who are "*one in spirit*," in worldly associations and objects, to be thus beguiled! How long, indeed, would it take to persuade the most simple-minded *believer*, possessing all the fulness of that "love which thinketh no evil," that Christians in the present day, are "*one in spirit*?" I see no reason in the New Testament, but the contrary, why the Christians in any given locality should not *all* meet together in visible unity and communion from week to week; nor why they should not have a community of pastors and teachers, according as the Spirit may have bestowed his gifts; nor why brethren in the Lord from any part of the world, speaking the same language, should not be received every where with gladness by the

Church, "as fellow-helpers to the truth." Just as we read of Apollos, who, without any appointment of man, but simply possessing competency to teach, being "an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures," after he had been labouring at Ephesus, "when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; who when he was come, helped them mightily who had believed through grace." I quite admit, it would be a most dangerous thing to allow such a man as Apollos, "an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures," to come in to help any of us in the work of the Lord (however we might be unable to do the work ourselves) while we look at the few souls we may have gathered around us as our *own* little flock, instead of the flock of *Christ*. But all danger ceases, and all jealousy expires, the moment we contemplate them as a part—a little part—of the one flock of Jesus, which he purchased with his blood. On the point of all the saints of God, in any given locality, meeting together for weekly communion, simply as disciples of Christ, I would observe, it may be imagined that from the number of enrolled church members amongst the Dissenters, and the stated communicants in connexion with the Establishment, no moderate-sized building would be sufficient to meet the necessity of the case. To this I would reply, in the first place, that, if the principle of communion be recognised, and an entire liberty of *inter-communion* be kept up, only on the ground of *love to Christ*, the number of buildings required for meeting in, leaves the principle of unity untouched, and the communion of saints perfect and entire. But in the next place I would say, I *wish* that the number of true

hearted disciples of Jesus, living the life of faith, and in manifest separation from the world, bore the least proportion to those who are joined in outward communion, or professed Church-fellowship. In venturing any judgment on the fewness of God's people, in contrast with the numbers that wear the garb of an outward profession but have not on "the wedding garment," I would always remember the word of God to Elijah concerning his hidden ones—"I have reserved to myself seven thousand men that have not bowed the knee to Baal;" but at the same time I would bear in mind that, with regard to all who profess Christ, there is one rule of judgment and test of sincerity given us by our Lord himself—"By their *fruits* ye shall know them." And assuredly it is to be feared, that it is no violation of Christian charity to say, that the great majority of those who are admitted to the Lord's table in the purest communities among the Dissenters\* would "be found wanting," if tried by this standard, or weighed in this balance.

It is, to me, no proof *whatever* that a person is a true disciple of Christ, from the fact of his having been received as a member of a dissenting church; although I find it continually used as a recommendation, I had almost said a "stalking-horse," in advertisements in the "Evangelical Magazine," and elsewhere. I know, indeed, that in order to church-fellowship, "*a credible profession*" is, in most communities, required; but the great Head of the Church tells us not to look at the

\* I have not mentioned the Lord's table in connexion with the Establishment, because, alas! no separation of the precious from the vile, is, or can be made. All persons who are not "excommunicate," &c. have the right of approach, irrespective of any *spiritual* qualification.



profession, but at the fruits, which implies a personal knowledge of the individual's conversation and walk. "Not every one that saith unto me, *Lord, Lord*, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." I find, indeed, no lack of *profession* on every hand; but, except in solitary cases (the exceptions to the rule), I know not where to look for fruit. The purest part of the professing Church asks, as a title to membership, for "a credible profession." Christ talks to us of separation from the world, the denial of self, and the daily cross, as the only valid proofs of discipleship to him! Which standard am I to take? For myself, then (and every Christian must act on his own responsibility to Christ), *I cannot*, whatever others may do, with the New Testament in my hand, be a party to the continuance of those distinctions and terms of separation between Christian brethren, the root of which the Holy Ghost declares to be carnality, and which it was his mind to put down as soon as they arose. "Whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal?" The only name by which believers in Christ ought ever to have been known in the world, is that of *Christians*; and the glorying which we now see in the Church in the name of Baptist, and Independent, and Episcopalian, is but glorying in our shame. And when Christians talk about the Baptist *cause*, or the Methodist *cause*, or the Independent *cause*, it just declares they have something to care for, as the professed followers of Christ, which the Holy Spirit *cannot* regard, since *his* mind is ever

upon the *cause of CHRIST*. Nor will he be restricted within a narrower circle. "Is Christ *divided*? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" Seeing this, then, I cannot consent to stand upon any basis, since the Lord has shown it to me, that is not broad enough for *all* the saints of God to meet me upon, or for me to meet *them* upon. I do not say, in the least, I shall be able to persuade them to meet me here. Nor do I say that I shall *see* them gathered here; although it is the strong desire of my soul that "*Christ* may gather together in one all the children of God that are scattered abroad." But this I do say, by the grace of God, I must stand where *all* the saints of God *may* meet me, if they please, *on earth*, and where they *all must* meet me in *heaven*. For I need hardly say—(the *thought* cannot be tolerated for a moment by one who truly knows the Lord)—that no one assuredly will join the company of the redeemed before the throne, as an Episcopalian, or an Independent, or Baptist, or Methodist, &c., but as one who has believed in Jesus, and "washed his robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The one harmonious song of the ransomed Church above is, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth." The simple term of communion on earth, as presented in the New Testament, is, "Receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God." And here I find at once presented to me, "*Christian* in opposition to *party* communion." This, however, is at the utmost possible remove from

indiscriminate admission to the Lord's table. Christ has taught us, in this matter, the *rule* of judgment, when he says, "By their fruits ye shall know them." And the Holy Spirit has taught us the *power* of judging in the declaration, "He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? *But we have the mind of Christ.*" Let no one, therefore, excuse himself, in a continued connexion with evil, by saying, "We cannot judge men's hearts." Especially let not Dissenters say this, since they have claimed the power of judging, in the fact of their professed separation from the world, in the largest sense; and also in their actual separation from the Established Church; and still further, in their separation, as Church-members, from the persons composing the mass of the congregations to which they belong. And the fact is that every spiritual person, whether Churchman or Dissenter, *does* in every case, where there is any evidence of character before his mind (and when there is none, where is the communion of saints?) *judge* the state before God of his brethren at the table of the Lord; and does, in *heart*, separate from those whom he deems *un-spiritual*, and would be thus guilty of the sin of schism (if the objection held good), whether he has the moral courage to take the step of actual separation or not.

Perhaps, instead of using the phrase "moral courage," I ought to have said, the principle of obedience to Christ in sufficient strength to induce the step of an actual separation. For it is the command of Christ to separate from any brother who walks disorderly; "to

purge out the old leaven ;” and “if any man that is called a brother, be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner ; with such an one, no not to eat.”

I have found many very sincere disciples of Christ startled at the idea, that this simple bond of union amongst Christians, is all that is recognised in the New Testament ; and that the only name which the followers of the Lamb ought to be known by and *recognise* on earth, is that of brethren, or disciples, or Christians, or followers of Christ. Many, I know, imagine there must be some concealment of error, under an exterior so simple ; and that anarchy only can result from the practical acknowledgment of a principle most sedulously inculcated in the New Testament, that *all* believers are possessed of equal privileges ; have *all* the right of equal nearness of access to God ; and are, by faith in Jesus, *all* “made kings and priests unto God and his Father ;” and that “one is their Father in heaven, and all they are brethren.” Now as far as it may be thought, there *is*, in truth, some *concealment* under a name so general, and so widely assumed, as that of Christian ; and some *laxity* in a term of communion so simple as that of love to Christ ; I would say, it is quite competent to every enquiring mind to prosecute, to the utmost, an examination on this point. I am quite sure that any Christian, wishing to know the utmost of this matter, would be met with all possible candor, by any of the brethren who accord with the principles I am attempting to state from the word of God, in his desire to try *avowed principles* by the only standard of truth—the written word of God ; or, if he chose,

to leave out of consideration any statement of professed principles, and desired to go *through the word of God*, in order to discover what doctrines and principles were deemed to be taught in any of the statements it contains, he would be as cheerfully met, in his search after truth, in this *exegetical* mode. I mention this merely to obviate an objection I have heard on this point. But in truth, the apparent strangeness and *newness* of these simple principles do not arise from their having no archetypes in the New Testament, but from their being so opposite to the complicated systems and forms of men, which have been invented and upheld in direct *opposition* to the word of God. With me, however, it is a first principle that Christianity, in all respects,—comprehending the doctrines of the Church, its order, and position in the world,—is presented in its perfection and completeness in the New Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ. And it ought to be with me, and with every believer in Christ, as little a matter of dispute, that the *true Church of God* is, and ought to be, what it ever was, separated from all association with an “ungodly world,” and testifying against its evil deeds; and that the *world* is, what it ever was, hostile, utterly hostile, to Christ and to the followers of Christ. “We know (says the Apostle John speaking by the Spirit) that we are of God, and that the whole world lieth in the wicked one.” I conclude, therefore, that, if there has been any friendship or coalition on the part of the professing Church with the world, it has been at the expense of Christianity, and at the price of a practical denial of Jesus Christ. The world will meet the Church on no other

terms. It "crucified the Lord of life and glory;" it said "We will not have this man to reign over us." Satan is now its God. The temper of the world is exactly the same towards Christ as it was when its hands were stained with his blood; and as it ever *must be* while it has Satan for its God. "If the world hate you (says Christ), ye know that it hated me, before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would *love* its own, but because ye are *not* of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord; if they have persecuted me they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also;" for "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father but is of the world." "Whosoever will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God."

The unity of the Church, and its power in the Holy Ghost, cannot but be subjects of intense interest to every child of God, especially when contemplating its divided and weakened state in this country, and in the present day. How dreadfully opposite to that *oneness* of all true believers that the world is to recognize as a proof that the Father hath sent Jesus, is the present miserable and distracted state of the Church! How far, how very far, is the Church from exhibiting that picture of harmony, and vigour, and mutual dependance of its members one upon another, which the Holy Ghost illustrates by the union, and sympathy, and harmony that subsist between the various members of the human body!

“ For as the body is *one*, and hath many members ; and *all* the members of that one body, being many, are one body : so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we have been baptized into one body.” And in Eph. iv. 15, “ But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which *every joint* supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of *every part*, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

It is indeed a truth, with regard to the Church of God (the whole Church), that “ if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it ;” and it is the suffering of so many of the members, at the present moment, that is the true cause of the sorrow and weakness of the whole body. Alas ! instead of the centre of unity—Christ and our brotherhood in him, being constantly presented before the world, and pressed upon the minds of the children of God, the points of their *division* and separation are continually, with a painful prominence, rising up to view.

It is quite *forgotten*, that “ there is *one* body, and *one* Spirit, even as we are called in *one* hope of our calling *one* Lord, *one* faith, *one* baptism, *one* God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephes. iv. 4) ; but it is *remembered* that we are Churchmen, and Dissenters—Episcopalians, Independents, Baptists, and Methodists. And thus upon a *name*, or upon some little portion of truth (where *the mind of the Spirit* cannot be, because his especial work is to testify of Christ), which each may hold in opposition to the other,

is the Church of God rent and divided! Alas! there might never have been such a declaration uttered as, "One is your Father in heaven, and all ye are brethren," or such an injunction pressed, as "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace;" or such a purpose in the mind of God as that "Christ should die, not for the Jewish nation only, but that he might gather together in *one*, all the children of God that are scattered abroad;" or such a prayer of the Saviour's heart ever presented to his Father, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

The only hope of "the divided Church being made one," is to be found in a return to scriptural simplicity, in principle and in practice, on the part of all true believers; and in seeking that union *individually*, (without reference to the creeds, or appointments, or arrangements of men—whether Dissenting or Established,) which the Holy Ghost presents in the spiritual priesthood of every child of God, and in their consequent boldness of access, by the blood of Jesus, into the very presence of God; *having* none, and *requiring* none, between their souls and God, but their "Great High Priest over the House of God, Jesus Christ, who ever liveth to make intercession for them."

I do desire that all true Christians may endeavour to dismiss from their minds that fearful array of man's order in the Church of God, which has risen up under the Prince of the power of the air, and has most effec-



tually concealed from many of the children of God, the beauty and simplicity of truth, as it is presented in the book of *God's order* in the Church, in the present dispensation; and especially unfolded in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the Epistles to the Churches of the New Testament. In this book of *God's order* in the Church, they will find the simplest principles at work, and an outward form in the Church, which, to the natural mind, appears to be a pure *democracy*, but which, in fact, is, to the spiritual mind, an absolute *despotism* (using the word in a good sense), being the absolute rule of God's Spirit in the Church. For the Spirit *is* absolute in his rule in the Church, in the absence of Christ, "dividing to every man severally as he will." And that sovereignty is manifested in the present low and wretched state of the Church, which is the result of the Spirit's *refusing* to act, where man's order and appointment have altogether trenched upon his prerogative. If souls are converted to Christ in connexion with the present systems of men, it is because the Holy Ghost will *not be shut out*, by man's wilfulness, from his gracious operations on the hearts of those who are chosen in Christ to obtain the adoption of sons. But in the defect in the Church of the fruits of the Spirit, "which are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," there is, also, as decided a proof of his sovereignty, inasmuch as he will *not bestow* his most precious gifts upon the Church when his authority is opposed, and, by man's order and appointment, virtually set aside.

The *diversity* of gift and ministry in the church under

the administration of the Spirit, is very clearly presented in Romans xii. 6, 8. "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy,\* let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth (in the church), with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness." I would not say it is *impossible*—for "all things are possible with God"—that this diversity of gifts should ever be conferred on *one* man, or that it is an absolute *absurdity* to suppose that this affluence of spiritual endowment should always be concentrated in the person of that one particular man, who by human appointment is set to exercise the whole sum of ministry in the church; and that there should be an absolute *penury* of gift and endowment, for the edification of the body, on the part of all those who are simply ministered to; but I do say such a concentration of gift was never contemplated by the Spirit, as the invariable order of things, though individual cases might occur; nor such a *monopoly* of spiritual power ever *granted* by the Spirit, however much, to the undoing of the Church, it has been arrogated by men. He still "*divides to every man severally as he will.*" And let Christians look to it, how they transfer their responsibility to Christ to others who have stepped in officiously, to transact for them a matter which belongs exclusively to God and their own souls, and which none can transact but themselves.

\* I may here, once for all, say, I do not in the least contemplate the bestowment of any of those miraculous gifts, which have been arrogated by some whose distinctive name I need not here mention, but whose errors should serve as a beacon-flame to the church of God.

The diversity of gifts we have just contemplated, is God's arrangement for the glory of Christ and the good of the Church; and therefore has he given us definite rules for the *exercise* of these spiritual gifts, wherever they are bestowed; for "God is not the God of confusion but of order." These rules are most explicitly laid down in 1 Cor. xiv. 23—35. "If therefore *the whole Church* be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? but if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth. How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. *Let all things be done unto edifying.* If any man speak in a tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may *all* prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak."

This is *God's* order. And it is to my mind a most decisive proof that this order was according to the mind of the Spirit, however much of confusion and the flesh was mingled up with it in the Corinthian church. Had there been any thing wrong *in itself*, in this unbounded liberty of ministry in the church (except in the case of women), it is impossible that it should not, at this time, have been *forbidden and put down*. How easy to have said—how certain that it would have been said, had there been the slightest ground for it in the mind of the Spirit—“You might have been sure there would be tumult and confusion, if the church meet without a *minister*, or some one appointed to keep order. You ought not to have met at all; especially you ought not to have met *to speak* without your ministers.” Also in the Lord's Supper, where there was the greatest disorder—which disorder is strongly censured—the same argument applies. How natural, if it had been wrong for the church to meet for its celebration, to have said, “You are altogether *wrong* in meeting to partake of the Lord's Supper without a minister to *dispense* it.” But nothing of the sort occurs, because it is right, and according to the mind of Christ, that wherever there are two or three disciples only in a place, they should meet in simplicity, and in obedience to the command of their Lord, to show forth his death, in the breaking of bread, &c. till he come. I say it is *right*; for had there been the least that was *wrong in the thing itself*, this was the very place for it to have been brought out. Therefore the objection which is frequently urged against any practical rules for the guidance of the church being

drawn from the Epistle to the Corinthians, on account of the *disorders* prevalent in that church, actually "turns to us for a testimony" in their favour: because, though we find the Holy Spirit entirely censuring the *disorders* of that church; yet he does not in the least hint that the order and practice out of which this tumult and confusion amongst the Corinthians arose, was wrong in itself. The *disorder* was wrong; but the liberty of ministry, and the celebration of the supper, when divested of this disorder, were perfectly right. I say this is God's order; and the law by which all is to be retained in harmonious operation, is found in the command, "All of you be subject one to another," and "Whosoever will be *great* amongst you shall be your minister (servant); and whosoever will be *chiefest*, shall be servant of all." The harmony of a church so constituted may be, and will be, through the carnal mind of man and the imperfections of the saints, disturbed; and the immediate, and the only, cure which the Holy Spirit provides for this, is found in obedience to the command, "Purge out the old leaven;" for "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." There is no provision made for keeping *out* entirely all "leaven;" but the Church is put upon its responsibility to Christ and the Holy Spirit, to purge out the leaven whenever it appears. It is not, under any circumstances, to be suffered to work. And what is important to notice in this connexion is, that these commands concerning the discipline of the Church, and the means of its purification, are not given to the *pastors* of the Church, but to the Church itself—the body, whether great or small, of Christian people. And by the Church are they to be enforced.

A word now as to the order of arrangement of service or ministry, after which inquiry is likely to be made. On this point, I may say, I find in the New Testament a most marked distinction ever kept up between the Church and the world. I see, throughout the New Testament, this principle always assumed, that there are but *two* classes of persons in the world, and that every individual is connected with either the one or the other: either *in* the Church or *in* the world. There is no *neutral* position for any man. No man is dealt with in the New Testament as in a hopeful state of feeling, or as if he were just in progress from *unbelief* to faith; just in the course of transition from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God's dear Son. Assuredly, every person who is addressed by the Gospel is, at any given moment of his life, *in principle*, and in the view of God, standing either in heaven or in hell. Standing with Christ in faith, or with the devil in unbelief. And there is only the circumstance—the mere accident of *time*,—the breath of his nostrils—between him and his *actual* position with the one or the other. “He that believeth on the Son of God is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” “We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lieth in the wicked one.”

There is no legislation in the New Testament for “*almost Christians*.” There is no *recognised* standing for such in the Word of God. *This* is the unalterable principle of the judgment of Jesus Christ, “He that is not with me is against me.” From this radical distinc-

tior in character and position in the sight of God, flows what every Christian must have noticed, that most distinctive mode of address adopted by the Holy Ghost. To the *world* there is but *one* message to be proclaimed : the message of reconciliation with God through the blood of Jesus Christ. This is the especial work of the *evangelist*, and in its discharge he is called to *go forth* to the world with his message, instead of waiting, as is the custom of this day, until the world is willing to come in to join with the Church in order to hear. But to the *Church* there is quite a different order of address—an entirely different character of ministry. *Here* it is the special object of the Holy Spirit to warn every man, and to teach every man, and to “present every man perfect.” To this end, the riches of God’s inheritance in the saints, as well as the unsearchable riches of Christ, as the inheritance of the Church, are unfolded ; which presents a field for the labours of the “pastor and teacher,” whose office is quite distinct from the evangelist, or preacher of the gospel. But pastorship in the whole Church has almost entirely ceased ; and the only *teaching* in the Church, with few exceptions, is the constant iteration of the message of reconciliation to the *world*,—a message which the believer learns, once for all, when he is brought by grace to receive Christ ; and from that point is to be led forward into the fulness of truth, and grace, and privilege, and responsibility unfolded in the word of God.

I see it to be right, therefore, and according to the mind of the Spirit, for believers in Christ to meet, simply as believers and brethren in Christ, for com-

munion in the body and blood of Christ, "not forsaking the assembling of OURSELVES together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another," &c. And the very point of communion I see to be beautifully presented in the words of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. x. 16, 17): "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?—the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." This, again, is sweetly confirmed by the apostolic practice of the weekly communion of saints in the body and blood of Christ, presented in Acts xx. 7. "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples met together to break bread, Paul discoursed to them, ready to depart on the morrow.\*

\* I know that some would invalidate the authority of this text by verbal criticism. In the first place it is objected, that *τῶν μαθητῶν*, or the disciples, is rejected by Griesbach from his amended text; and that therefore it only proves the *Apostles* to have met together "to break bread," and not all the disciples. In the next place, it is objected that the narration would have taken the same form if, instead of *weekly* communion, it had been *monthly*, or at the recurrence of any other given period; or, in other words, that the passage might be understood as a form of expression equal to "the ordinance sabbath." In the first place I have only to say, that *μαθητῶν* is a reading in Mills' text, though rejected by Griesbach. Griesbach reads *ἡμῶν*, "when *we* were come together to break bread," which is contradicted by the next clause; Paul discoursed to *THEM*! Who were the "*them*?" referred to, if they were not the disciples? Such criticisms remind us of the process by which certain substances are held in chemical solution; no matter what the text *does* mean, if by any process it can be made not to mean what its simple reading *appears* to mean.

And then, as to the criticism that it might mean *that* first day of the week when the disciples met, I only say, there is a demonstrative pronoun in the Greek, which would assuredly have been



Then, as I find in the New Testament, the greatest prominence is given to the *churches*; and as the edifying of the body of Christ (or the building up of believers into their right position in the body) is an object dear to the heart of God, and is the chief subject of the Epistles of the New Testament, I see that the *teaching of the Church* is a point of the greatest importance to be kept in view. For, in fact, God's ultimate design in the work of redemption, so far as man is concerned, and in the preaching of the gospel, is to gather a *church* out of the midst of an ungodly world, which Christ will present to the Father, a "glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." Therefore do I deem it consonant with the word of God, that at frequent periods, and once at least every Lord's Day, believers should be gathered together, where God has bestowed the gift of teaching, and that their instruction should be especially sought. I see, indeed, no warrant for excluding the world, as by worshipping with closed doors, yet the presence of the world should not be contemplated, but especially should the teaching be directed for the comfort, or instruction, or exhortation, or warning of the *Church*, as the Spirit may direct.

But further, as the world is to be testified to, until the end of the gospel dispensation, and as the preaching

employed to express *that* first-day of the week; for there is no adverb in the Greek text answering to our "*when*:" and, in fact, the simple reading of the passage is, "On the first day of the week the disciples having met together to break bread;" which requires only a little simplicity of mind, and freedom from prepossession, to understand as the narration of the current practice in apostolic times of the weekly communion of saints in the Lord's Supper.

of the gospel is God's appointed means for gathering souls to Christ, the Lord's day should be especially employed in the work of evangelizing, by those to whom the Lord has committed that gift. And, indeed, *every* one who *knows* the gospel himself, and has the competency to teach it, *may* engage in this work; since the only authority for its discharge, in the New Testament, is presented in the words of the apostle of the Gentiles, as it is written, "I believed, therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and *therefore* speak." This work of evangelizing, or preaching the gospel, is by no means to be confined within the limits of a given building, since the original command is, "*Go ye out* into all the world, and preach the gospel unto every creature." And the true evangelist *now*, whose heart burns for the conversion of souls, must still *go out* and preach the gospel. But if this exercise be carried on by one or more competent persons (I mean competent through the teaching of the Holy Ghost), in any given place, then of course one should not invite the disciples of Christ to attend; since, if the message be presented with suitability to sinners, it can only be the offer of salvation through the blood of the Lamb, and beseeching them to be reconciled to God,—things which the saint of God has already experienced, and which he does not require to learn and accept a second time.

I the more dwell on the necessity of this distinction and separation, because I am sure that the neglect of it, in the great congregations that are gathered together in this metropolis, is just destroying souls. For multitudes imagine themselves to be Christians, and that they wor-

ship God, and are in "a good way," because they attend regularly a church or chapel, without even knowing, or being told, that the worship of God is *impossible* to one who is not renewed in the spirit of his mind; for "they that *worship* God, must worship him in spirit and in truth." And, on the other hand, the saints of God are kept in miserable darkness and weakness, and in the position of those who are "ever learning, but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth," through having nothing but death and judgment set before them, and the offers of salvation by Christ pressed upon their minds, without their knowing (or, at least, without an abiding sense of the truth) that when they believed—the *moment* they believed—they "passed from death unto life," were made "the sons of God," "accepted in the Beloved," "freely justified by his grace;" and concerning whom the Holy Ghost, by the Apostles, thus speaks: "Giving thanks unto the Father, who *hath* made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who *hath* delivered us from the power of darkness, and *hath* translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom we *have* redemption, through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

The reason why I have said no more about the outward form and order of the Church is, that it is the root of all evil in religion, and the very folly of man's heart, to be ever setting up *forms* and *systems* for God to work in, instead of humbly waiting on God, and entreating him to restore, in infinite grace, whatever gifts he may see to be for the glory of Christ and meet to be bestowed upon an apostate Church. It *may* be that the Lord will

have his children to continue in all imaginable weakness, that he may "stain the pride of all glory," and that the honour of any "reviving in their bondage," may be all, manifestly, his own. Men have so entirely idolized the gifts of ministry, have been so wrapped up in their own systems and order, and have been unable to discover any glory where crowds are not gathered together, and where an array of worldly distinctions has not met the eye, that one would be quite prepared for any reviving of vital religion to come in, in entire opposition to all these things, which have so long been the occasions of man's glorying, and the means of grieving and hindering the Spirit.

This much, however, is certain, that some who have busied themselves in preparing a system of machinery for the Spirit to operate in, and who have been appointing elders and establishing order in the flesh, have been just dictating to the Holy Ghost the instruments by which he must work, and, in a great degree, the nature and extent of his operations; and in doing so have brought nothing but trouble upon their own souls, without establishing that which was desired. How do I know that twelve elders is just the number by which the Spirit will be pleased to work? How can I tell that every one of these elders is fitted to take the oversight of just fifty or sixty souls? How can I tell that the men whom I, or others, appoint, are those by whom the Spirit will operate at all? Or how can I tell that he has fitted them, by his gifts, to occupy exactly that station which I, in my short-sightedness, may have assigned them? Do I rule in the Church, or does the Holy Spirit rule? Does the

Church, or does the Holy Spirit, "distribute to every man severally as he will?" *Where* am I directed, in the Word of God, to set up an arrangement, or order, which *may* go on without the Spirit's concurrence? and which, as a piece of machinery, *must* go on, whether the Spirit is acting in it or not? Is not this the very folly of the Irvingites; who, in addition to their doctrinal errors, are setting up an apparatus of apostles, and prophets, and angels, and I know not what besides, without any warrant from the Word of God, instead of simply and humbly waiting upon the Lord, and leaving him to restore what he will, and what he sees to be suited to the exigences of his disordered and distressed Church? Let us, if we would take our right position, seek to have the acorn planted, which, by the favour of God, will germinate, and expand with life and verdure in every part, slow though its advances may appear; while, if our impatience will have at once the tree planted in its full size, we must be content to behold its sapless and withered branches, showing, indeed, the ramifications of the spreading oak, but deserted by the principle of life, and affording no healthful shadow to our souls. A return to simplicity, I know, in the estimation of even true Christians, who have been walking in the strength of man's systems, will be a return to weakness. And, in *reality*, it will be a return to weakness. But if it be a return to God, if it be a return to the position of obedience, to the place of blessing, to the place where we can have God's mind fully with us; where we shall experience the outflowing of the grace of Christ, which is ever sufficient for

us, and whose "strength is made perfect in weakness," surely it is the place, above all others, to be desired; the place to which every humble, sorrowing, yet believing soul, should seek.

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## CHAPTER II.

### PRINCIPLES OF TRUTH. ADDRESSED ESPECIALLY TO CHRISTIANS AMONGST THE INDEPENDENTS.

IN speaking to Independents, or Congregationalists, on the spiritual priesthood of believers; the unscripturalness of the distinction of "clergy and laity;" the perfect equality, in Christ, of all the children of God; liberty of ministry; the want of authority, in the New Testament, for man's ordination, or appointment to spiritual office in the Christian Church; and the entire voluntariness of the New Testament provision for the support of all recognised-ministry in the Church and to the world; I may use the more freedom, as I am, on these points, speaking merely of matters which are in accordance with their *AVOWED principles*, however much their *practice*, in some of these things, may contravene the principles they profess, or, at least, admit. In speaking to Christians, as Christians, without noticing any distinction of sects, the standard of appeal is, of course, simply the Word of God; but in addressing Christian brethren among the Independents, I feel myself at liberty to refer to their acknowledged principles, although, *from them*,

the appeal must, of course, ultimately be made to the written Word. The Reformers, it is well known, whom God raised up to awaken the Churches of Christendom from the deadly slumbers of the Romish superstition, came out upon points of doctrine, having especially to contend for the fundamental doctrine of justification by faith; and they did not understand the true principles of order in the Church, as presented in the Word of God. Nor, indeed, did they examine the Scriptures for the purpose of deducing from thence their principles of ecclesiastical polity; but they rather assumed the lawfulness of availing themselves of the aid of the secular power in the work of reformation, and in consolidating and ruling the church of God. Ecclesiastical polity, as unfolded in the New Testament, in opposition to the Judaizing notions of the advocates of establishments, has been the peculiar study of the independents. And however much the loose principles of Erastianism are on the increase amongst the modern congregationalists, the earliest writers of the Independents maintained that the true principles of church-government are fully revealed in the New Testament. With this position I fully agree; and I confess, I would not contend a single moment, either by word or pen, for any principle, doctrine, or practice, however supported by the best antiquity, if its origin could not be deduced from this source. I have not the *slightest* faith in history or *tradition* in the things of God. I have the most unhesitating confidence in the *word* of God. Brown, however, the earliest of the Independents, held the liberty of ministry, the equality of Christian brethren, the Spirit's

teaching and competency (and not man's appointment or ordination), as the proper and only warrant for ministry in the present dispensation. Milton also, whose tractates are so often cited by dissenters against the supporters of establishments, maintains entirely the spiritual priesthood of all true believers, and utterly repudiates the idea of any *order* of men being allowed to come in as *priests*, whatever be their name, between God and his people, to be the medium of intercourse, and the link of their connexion with heaven. Maintaining, what the New Testament so emphatically enforces, the personal responsibility of every individual believer to God, and the impossibility of transacting by proxy those matters which relate to God and the soul, and can only be carried on by the aid of the Spirit, through the divine mediation of Jesus at the right hand of God. So far Milton's principles, as an Independent, accord with the principles of the New Testament: and many of his pungent remarks in the tractate entitled "The Likeliest Means to remove Hirelings out of the Church," deserve the grave and practical attention of the pastors and people of other sections of the professing church, besides that which is by law established. I just quote a brief passage from the close of it, commending the perusal of the whole to those who would see a clear and forcible exposition of the mischief which has been wrought in the Church, by the exhibition of *lures* of any kind, to induce men to take upon themselves a work which they should undertake "willingly, and not by constraint, nor for filthy lucre's sake." "Heretofore, in the first evangelic times (and it were happy for Christendom were it so again), ministers



of the gospel were by nothing else distinguished from other Christians, but by their spiritual knowledge and sanctity of life, for which the Church elected them to be her teachers and overseers, though not thereby to separate them from *whatever calling* she then found them following besides; as the example of St. Paul declares, and the first times of Christianity. When once they affected to be called a *clergy*, and became, as it were, a distinct order in the commonwealth, bred up for divines in babbling schools, and fed at the public cost, good for nothing else but what was good for nothing, they soon grew idle; that idleness, with fulness of bread, begat pride and perpetual contention with their feeders, the despised laity, through all ages ever since; to the perverting of religion and the disturbance of all Christendom;”—of which “Christendom might soon rid herself and be happy, if Christians would but know their own dignity, their liberty, their adoption; and let it not be wondered if I say, *their spiritual priesthood*, whereby they have all equally access to any ministerial function, whenever called by their own abilities and the Church, though they never came near commencement or university. But while Protestants, to avoid the due labour of understanding their own religion, are content to lodge it in the breast, or rather in the books of a clergyman, and to take it thence by scraps and mammocks, as he dispenses it in his Sunday’s dole; they will be always learning, and never knowing; always infants; always his vassals, as lay-Papists are to their priests; or at odds with him, as reformed principles give them some light to be not wholly conformable.” Having thus quoted from

Milton, I may here make a brief extract from the work of an ecclesiastical historian of most deserved reputation amongst all discerning Christians, and amongst none more than the Independents. Dr. Neander, the first volume of whose work was translated from the German in 1831, by Mr. Henry John Rose, B. D., Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, says, "The formation of the Christian Church being derived from the peculiarities of Christianity, must essentially differ from all other religious unions. A class of priests, who were to guide all other men, under an assumption of their incompetence in religious matters, whose business it was exclusively to provide for the satisfaction of the religious wants of the rest of mankind, and to form a link between them and God, and godly things; such a class of priests could find no place in Christianity. While the gospel put away that which separated man from God, by bringing all men into the same communion with God through Christ, it also removed that partition-wall which separated one man from his fellows, in regard to his more elevated interests: the same High Priest, and Mediator for all, by whom all being reconciled and united with God, become themselves a priestly and spiritual race! one heavenly King, Guide, and Teacher, through whom all are taught from God! one faith! one hope! one spirit, which must animate all! one oracle in the hearts of all—the voice of the Spirit which proceeds from God! and all citizens of one heavenly kingdom, with whose heavenly powers they have already been sent forth, as strangers in the world! When the apostles introduced the notion of a *priest*, which is found in the Old Testament, into Christianity,

it was always only with the intention of shewing, that no such visible distinct priesthood as existed in the economy of the Old Testament could find admittance into that of the New; that, inasmuch as free access to God and to heaven was once for all opened to the faithful by the one high priest, Christ, they had become, by union with him himself, a holy and spiritual people; and their calling was only this, namely, to consecrate their whole life, as a sacrifice of thanksgiving for the mercy of God's redemption, and to preach the power and grace of Him, who had called them from the kingdom of darkness into his wonderful light, and their whole life was to be a continued priesthood, a spiritual serving of God, proceeding from the affections of a faith working by love, and also a continued witness of their Redeemer. Compare 1 Peter ii. 9; Romans xii. 1, and the spirit and connexion of ideas, throughout the whole Epistle to the Hebrews. And thus also the furtherance of God's kingdom, both in general and in each individual community, the furtherance of the propagation of Christianity among the heathen; and the improvement of each particular church was not to be the concern of a particular chosen class of Christians, but the nearest duty of every individual Christian.

“ Every one was to contribute to this object from the station assigned to him by the invisible Head of the Church, and by the gifts peculiar to him, which were given him by God, and grounded in his nature—a nature which retained its individual character, but was regenerated and ennobled by the influence of the Holy Spirit.

“ There was here no division into spiritual and worldly,

but all, as Christians in their inward life and dispositions, were to be men, dead to the ungodliness of the world, and thus far departed out of the world; men animated by the Spirit of God, and not by the spirit of the world. The peculiar and prevailing capabilities of Christians, as far as they were sanctified and consecrated by this Spirit, and employed by it as the organs of its active influence, became *charismata*, or gifts of grace. Hence the apostle Paul began his address to the Corinthian church, on the subject of gifts, in this manner (1 Cor. xii.) "Once, when ye were heathen ye suffered yourselves to be led blindly by your priests to dumb idols; ye were dead and dumb as they. Now while ye serve the living God through Christ, ye have no longer any such leaders, to draw you blindly by leading strings. Ye have yourselves now the Spirit of God for your guide, who enlightens you. Ye no more follow in silence, he speaks out of you; there are many gifts, but there is one Spirit." Who shall arrogate that to himself which the enlightened apostle ventured not to do, *to be lord over the faith of Christians?*

"The condition of the Corinthian church, as it is depicted in the epistles of St. Paul, deficient as it was in many respects, shews us how a Christian church should act; how all in that church should mutually co-operate with their mutual gifts, as members of the same body, with equal honour, supplying one another's deficiencies. The office of a teacher was not here exclusively assigned to one or more, but every one who felt a call to that office, might address a discourse to the assembly of the church for the instruction of all.

“As Christianity did not annihilate the arrangements of our nature, founded in the laws of our original creation (although, in reference to the heavenly life, the partition-wall between man and wife was taken away, through Christ, and in him man and wife became one), it did not, I say, allow the female sex to step out of the peculiar habits and destination indicated for it by nature herself.\* Women alone are interdicted by St. Paul (1 Cor. xiv. 34) from speaking in the Church,—a proof, also, that no other exception from this general right of all Christians existed. This last exception was constantly thus retained in the times that followed; this even the fanciful Montanists recognised; they only determined that the extraordinary operations of the Spirit did not follow this rule; and they appealed to the case of the women that prophesied (1 Cor. xi.), although without good reason, for the Apostle is here only speaking of that which actually was the case in the Corinthian Church, without approving it, with the intention, at the same time of settling it afterwards, as appears from a comparison of the passage that follows, which we have cited above.”

These are some of the avowed and accredited principles of Independency; by which, and by the New Testament, it has been my desire, for the sake of truth and the honour of the Lord Jesus, to examine the present position and practice of that section of professing Christians by whom these principles are held.

\* Of course, it will be kept in mind, that this is said, with regard to *earthly* associations, not heavenly position; for there the distinctive grades between Jew and Greek, bond and free, male and female, are done away, and *all are one*.

There is also one other master-principle fully deserving of all the prominence that is given to it, almost universally, by Independents. I mean "the sufficiency of the Word of God in all matters of faith and practice;"—the whole credenda and the agenda of the individual disciple, and of the united Church. It is on this principle, of the complete sufficiency of the Word of God regarding all matters of faith and practice, that I desire before God and before all men to stand; bowing implicitly to the dictates of the Spirit in the record of God's will, but questioning and refusing those principles and practices which, however esteemed by men, are still derived from some other source, and are only sustained by some other authority of a more doubtful kind. It is by this test I desire that every thing I write, or preach, or practice, may be tried. Not that I, for a moment, imagine I have attained the grace to walk *perfectly* by this *perfect* rule, or that I may not, in my ignorance, hold many things contrary to it; but that I desire, in my soul, the rule and standard may remain unimpugned, however much my ignorance may be discovered, and my contrary practice condemned by its impartial application. Now, although I find my Christian brethren amongst the Dissenters very strenuously asserting this principle, and often quoting the celebrated aphorism of Chillingworth, "The Bible, the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants," I also find, in many things, the authority of this principle practically denied; and in some striking instances denied and subverted in form. It is with grief of heart I make a single observation on the sentiments of one who has been so highly esteemed in the Church

on account of his attainments and character,—I mean Dr. Pye Smith, of Homerton College;—but whose learning, and piety, and influence, in the instance to which I am about to allude, are all thrown into the scale of grievous error:—error, assuredly, if the principle of Protestants and Independents concerning the sufficiency of Scripture and many passages of the Word of God be founded in truth. In the Congregational Magazine for July, at page 431, I read this extraordinary declaration made by Dr. Smith:—“ I confess myself heartily to concur in the sentiments expressed by an esteemed clergyman, whose ministry is a distinguished blessing to this populous neighbourhood,— ‘ *No man is competent to excogitate for himself a religion out of the Bible, or out of any other book, without the assistance of all those various means which, in the Bible as in every other book, are indispensable to his reading, understanding, feeling, analysing, and judging of its multifarious contents. Our appeal should be to the Bible with every note and comment from every quarter; from all those legitimate and necessary helps which are supplied by grammatical, critical, historical, moral, and spiritual considerations, and which regulate our interpretation of every other book.*’ ”

To this simple and undisguised rejection of the fundamental principle of Protestantism, and avowal of the very basis-principle of Popery, I would rather say nothing of myself. I would merely reply to the simple-minded Christian who may be stumbled at such a statement, coming from such a man, that *Jesus Christ* has said, “ If any man is *willing* to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.” And the

*Holy Spirit* has said (notwithstanding all criticisms on the passage), "All Scripture (not 'all comment') is *inspired* of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect—*perfect*—thoroughly furnished unto every good work." In addition to this testimony of the Holy Spirit concerning the sufficiency of the Word of God, I would transcribe a sentence from Bishop Horsley; which may weigh with some minds, unconsciously perhaps, more than even the passages of Holy Writ :

"It were to be wished," says Bishop Horsley, "that no Bibles were printed without references. Particular diligence should be used in comparing the parallel texts of the Old and New Testaments. It is incredible," he adds, "to any one who has not made the experiment, what a proficiency may be made in that knowledge which maketh wise unto salvation by studying the Scriptures in this manner, *without any other commentary or exposition than what the different parts of the sacred volume mutually furnish for each other.* Let the most illiterate Christian study them in this manner, and let him never cease to pray for the illumination of that Spirit by which these books were dictated, and the whole compass of abstruse philosophy and recondite history shall furnish no argument with which the perverse will of man shall be able to shake this LEARNED Christian's faith."

Of course, I do not charge the sentiments of Dr. Smith upon the whole body in which he holds so conspicuous a station, because I know his views on inspira-



tion have been recently opposed by Dr. Bennett and some others, as subversive of Divine truth; but at the same time his situation, as tutor of a theological institution, together with his learning and urbanity, are calculated to win for his sentiments a wide and favourable reception.

But I find also amongst Dissenters, much more fully than in the Establishment, this basis-principle of Protestantism and Christianity subverted, by an almost universally received *mode of interpretation*, where it is not directly and in words denied. This principle,—the principle of allegorising or spiritualising away the plainest language of the prophetic Scriptures of the Old and New Testament,—was introduced by Origen; and, if fairly carried through, would infallibly overthrow the certainty of the plainest facts and doctrines presented in the Word of God. This vicious principle of giving a spiritual interpretation to the plain and *literal* terms of the sacred text, although it is chiefly employed upon those texts and prophecies of the Old and New Testaments that will not harmonise with preconceived notions of unfulfilled prophecy, and with unfounded theories concerning the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and a spiritual millennium, in opposition to the personal reign of Christ, that have obtained a currency amongst us since the days of Dr. Whitby; still does the mischief spread far beyond the range of texts that are thus immediately *dealt with*, and doubt and uncertainty are thrown over the most certain truths and principles of the Word of God.

Now, although I do not acknowledge Hooker to be any authority in ecclesiastical matters, except as he may

expound the principles of God's word, yet, I do entirely subscribe to the truth of his sentiments, on the principles of interpretation, which he thus expresses: "I hold it to be an infallible rule, in exposition of sacred Scripture, that where a *literal* construction will stand, the farthest from the letter is commonly the worst. There is nothing more dangerous than *this licentious and deluding art, which changeth the meaning of words*, as alchymy doth, or would do, the substance of metals—maketh of any thing what it listeth, and bringeth, in the end, all truth to nothing." "This witness is true;" and I do charge it, with all seriousness and sorrow, against Dissenters, that in their pulpits, especially, this spiritual alchymy is continually resorted to; and the result is, that the power and authority of God's word over the heart and consciences of the people, are almost brought to nothing. So many of the plainest precepts of God's word, as well as innumerable portions of prophetic truth, are subjected to the torture, before they are permitted to bear their testimony, that no one thinks of submitting implicitly to the plainest and most unequivocal declarations of Christ, or of the apostles, if they be unpalatable, until he has tried whether they may not be made to mean something else; and in this very process, whatever may be the result, which may always be predicted (for Satan will always help men in the work of obscuring the truth), the Word of God, as the Word of God, is stripped of all its power, and the mind and conscience entirely slide from beneath its grasp. It is through the prevalence of this principle of interpretation alone, that it can be accounted for, that, in scarcely any of the Dissenting pulpits is the

doctrine of the second coming of the Lord Jesus, or his pre-millennial advent, proclaimed. I do not mean that it does not obtain any *prominence* in the preaching of dissenting ministers generally;—this might, perhaps, be defended, by their saying they preached “the *cross* of Christ,” and were occupied about the important truths connected with the Saviour’s *former* coming;—but what I mean is, that the truth of God’s Word on this important doctrine is, through the adoption of a vicious principle of interpretation, generally subverted.

Instead of the direct statements of the Word of God, that the Lord Jesus Christ will, ere long, return to this world, to raise the dead who sleep in him (1 Cor. xv. 23), and gather together his saints who are living upon earth to himself at his coming (1 Thess. iv. 17), and that the Church is to expect nothing but sorrow and suffering in this world until her Lord’s return,—as the bride must of necessity mourn the absence of the bridegroom, and continue in sadness to wish for his return (John xvi. 33; Matt. ix. 15);—and that, at the coming of the Lord, the world will be visited with awful judgments, which are to issue in the restoration of the Jews to their own land, and to their long-lost national distinction under the reign of their then acknowledged Messiah (Zech. xiv.); and that, through his reign over his own people (“the Lord God having given him the throne of his father David, &c.”), all the nations of the earth are blessed, as delightfully portrayed in Psalm lxxii; while Satan, being bound for a thousand years, the earth will remain in peace, (Rev. xx. 1—3), “and the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. xi. 9); until, at

the end of the thousand years of blessedness, the loosing of Satan occasions a final apostasy, which is immediately visited by "fire from heaven," the descent of the "great white throne," the resurrection of all the wicked dead, and the final judgment when "death and hell are cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. xx. 7—15). I say, instead of these simple statements of the Word of God, believers are told to look forward to a spiritual millennium (if they live to see it, otherwise it is nothing at all to them), brought in by the gradual progress of the gospel, and by the advancement of knowledge, and science, and arts, and civilisation; and that after this thousand years of, I know not what kind of, blessedness, Christ will come to judgment, and, in one day, the dead will be raised, the living changed, the righteous and the wicked judged, and the world burned up,—the righteous, at once, entering into everlasting happiness, and the wicked into endless punishment.\*

This is not the place to go into the range of Scripture proof upon these momentous subjects; but this much may be affirmed, that nowhere in the New Testament is the present dispensation presented as a dispensation of universality, but the contrary; and nowhere, in the whole Word of God, is it said that the world shall be converted by the preaching of the gospel; but, on the contrary, it is declared that "this gospel of the kingdom must

\* In speaking of the *personal* coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, before the millennium, which I am sure is the doctrine taught in the Word of God, I do not deny a spiritual coming *now* as the portion of the Church; nor would I question the sincerity of dear Christian brethren whose minds have not yet been illuminated to receive this most consolatory and cardinal truth, given as the expectation of the Church.

first be preached for a *witness* unto all nations ; and *then* shall the *end come*" (Matt. xxiv. 14). I, indeed, most firmly believe, that "the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea," because *God* has said it ; but he has never said that it shall be effected by the agency of man, or by the preaching of the Gospel ; but, on the contrary, he has declared it shall be a work of his own, preceded by the most terrible judgments, and brought in by the righteous reign of our Lord Jesus Christ, after the present dispensation has closed up in hopeless apostasy. The whole matter is briefly presented in Acts xv. 14—17, compared with the parable of the wheat and tares, and the 72nd Psalm, the 11th of Romans, with many passages in the prophetic books. In the passage referred to in the Acts, we have this explicit statement, "Simeon hath declared how God, at the *first*, did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name, and to this agree the words of the prophets, as it is written, *after this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down ; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up, that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.*"

Before I leave this principle of interpretation, by which the simplest and plainest predictions and descriptions of God's future actings in this world are got rid of, or explained away, and the great hope of the Church (Christ's return) subverted, I would say, it is just that principle and process by which the Socinian attempts to set aside the very basis-truths of Christianity, and in the

employment of which the infidel sees, what, to him, is the very proof of priestcraft, and the confirmation of his unbelief, through the utter uncertainty and unintelligibility of the Word of God.

When I speak of the principle of spiritualising Scripture, as a *vicious* principle, and of a literal interpretation, as the only true and safe one, I, of course, do not say, for a moment, that there are not very many figurative expressions in the Word of God; nor do I speak against the deep spiritual instruction which is conveyed to the Church by many of the *transactions* recorded in the Word of God, but merely against a spiritual interpretation being permitted to nullify the literal accomplishment of any prediction; but, that every figure has some definite and literal meaning, as every type has its real antitype. But we must not treat the Word of God as if it were a book of apologues, on which man's ingenuity must be exercised in order to draw out of it the moral truth concealed beneath the drapery of metaphor and fable; for instance, when I find it declared that "Satan shall be bound a thousand years," although I do not think of a material chain, such as would be needful to restrain a material body, yet I do feel perfectly satisfied that Satan, as a fallen spiritual being, will be coerced and bound by such bonds and restraints as spirits may be held by, under the Almighty power of God. The spiritualizer might tell us, the binding of Satan for a thousand years, meant the subordination of evil principles under the predominance of the principles of benevolence, or any thing else that a perverted imagination might please to graft on to God's declaration of plain and simple truth. We have seen too much of these

principles of interpretation at work amongst the Neologians in Germany, and amongst the Socinians at home. .

I come now to some principles maintained by Dissenters, and especially by Independents, but which to me appear to be destitute of support from the word of God. The first I would notice is *the right of every church to choose its own pastor*. This right I do not see to be in the least recognised in the New Testament ; but in the very first chapter of the Acts, I find a direction given to the disciples by our Lord, which I am convinced, develops the distinguishing principle of the whole range and course of ministry in the present dispensation. "He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the *promise of the Father*, which, saith he, ye have heard of me" (Acts i. 4). And again, in the eighth verse, "Ye shall receive *power*, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you ; and ye shall be *witnesses unto me*, both in Jerusalem and in Judæa, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." It is the *Holy Ghost* alone that constitutes the Church a *witnessing church*. Where the Holy Spirit is *not*, there is no witness for Christ ; and where the Spirit is hindered and grieved in the church, the church's testimony unto Christ is weakened and broken. It is simply *power* of ministry (spiritual power), which is alone in the hands of the Spirit, and not *appointment*, whether by secular patronage, or by the choice of the multitude, that is the warrant for ministry in the present dispensation. "As it is written, I believed, therefore have I spoken ; we also believe, and therefore speak." Spiritual knowledge, and competency to teach, or minister, is the *sole* foundation, so far as I

can see, required for ministry in the New Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ. The possession of gift, whatever it be, and on whomsoever bestowed by the Spirit, the Church is doubtless *bound to recognise*; but power of bestowing gift, or of appointing to office, save that of stewardship of its secular concerns, *it has none*. Accordingly, the Apostle Paul never appeals to any want of appointment, or destitution of *ordination*, when he opposes the false teachers; nor does he allow of any warrant for his own apostleship in human appointment or even in human recognition (for, says he, "neither went I up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before me"), but entirely and alone in the call of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, on the one hand, he speaks of "not knowing the speech of the false teacher, but the *power*:" and, on the other hand, with regard to himself, he says, "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of *power*." Nor does the Apostle John, when warning the "Elect Lady" against those who pervert the truth, say one word about the appointment, or lack of appointment, of these false teachers: but rests the whole matter upon the doctrines or *power* of ministry they brought. And he puts it upon the responsibility of this Christian woman to judge their doctrines, saying (2 John 10), "If there come any unto you, and bring not *this doctrine*, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." And this is just where the Apostle Paul leaves the matter with the Galatian church (I mean upon personal responsibility to



Christ), calling for a personal judgment in the fear of the Lord. "If any *man* preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed," (Gal. i. 9). I would say, briefly, that *power*,—*spiritual* power—in direct opposition to human authority or appointment to office, is the distinguishing characteristic of ministry in the present Gospel dispensation, or dispensation of the Spirit. It was the very principle of our Lord's own ministry ; and hence was he met by the question, so rife in the present day, "by what *authority* dost thou these things?" 'There was *power* in the ministry of Christ, which even his enemies were compelled to admit, but whence did he derive his *authority*? And the same question was raised against the Apostles, after the day of Pentecost (Acts iv. 6, 7), "As many as were of the kindred of the High Priest were gathered together at Jerusalem. And when they had set Peter and John in the midst, they asked by what *power*, or by what name have ye done this?" "and they commanded them not to speak at all in the name of Jesus" (verse 18).

I do indeed find presented in the New Testament appointment to office in the Church by the Apostles, and also by Timothy and Titus, whom the Apostle Paul commissioned to ordain, or appoint, elders in every city. And I find also choice, or selection, by the spiritual judgment of the church, in the sixth chapter of the Acts, "Look ye out among you seven men, &c., whom we may appoint over this business." To Dissenters I need not say any thing about the commission which Paul gives to Timothy and Titus; because, all the force of these instances of appointment, as well as those by Paul and Barnabas, are

in favour of episcopal ordination; and the Dissenter has to meet this method of appointment with the advocates of episcopacy and establishments. I, therefore, leave them to decide the question, with this simple observation, that to my own mind there is not one particle of force in these instances, apart from "apostolic succession:" and of course, if I admit this, I go immediately back to reprobate Rome. I merely glance at this point here, without at all going into the question, because I am anxious to keep as clear as possible from all matters that are irrelevant.\*

I therefore notice at once the other scriptural method of selection for office in the Church, by the spiritual judgment of the people. I allude to Acts vi. Here I see the Church directed to look out from among themselves seven men, with certain qualifications, that they may be appointed by the apostles to be stewards of the temporal property of the Church;—and it is, in every parallel case, a most certain precedent to follow. But when I hear the argument advanced, that, because the Church was directed to choose men to hold a merely secular office (for that alone was contemplated in their choice), therefore the Church has a right to choose men to spiritual offices and authority, and thus to constitute them evangelists, or pastors, or teachers,—I merely say the argument is faulty, and the conclusion does not at all follow from the premises. I see the Holy Ghost distinctly marking out the

\* But whoever would see a clear refutation of the claims of *modern* episcopacy, and apostolic succession (written, indeed, with too much acerbity of style), will do well to read a work just published by Jackson and Walford, entitled "The Claims of Episcopacy Refuted," by Dr. Mason, of New York; with an Introduction and Appendix, by Mr. Blackburn, of Pentonville.

manner of the appointment of those persons to a *secular* office: but afterward I find the same men exercising spiritual gifts in the Church, without one word relating to their appointment to this; because, in fact, the Church had no right of choice or appointment here; but merely to *recognize* and receive any gifts which the Holy Ghost had bestowed. Therefore, while I acknowledge the full right of the Church to choose its stewards to take care of its temporal affairs;—because I see the whole matter so plainly directed by the Holy Spirit;—I do not see the slightest ground for that which is so confidently concluded from it by Independents, the right of the Church to choose for itself its pastors, and teachers, and evangelists. Paul's own apostleship, as the apostle of the Gentiles, is the type of the whole character of ministry in this dispensation. “Paul, an apostle, not of *men*, neither by *man*, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father who raised him from the dead;” and again, of his *ministry*, he says, “I neither received it of *man*, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of *Jesus Christ*.” And the case of Apollos is a delightful illustration of the recognition, and the willing reception, by the *whole* Church, of those spiritual men, on whom the Holy Spirit had been pleased to bestow any gift for the edification of the body of Christ:—Acts xviii. 24: “And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently in the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue:

whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him : who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace : for he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scripture that Jesus was Christ" (marg. is the Christ).

Here there is neither choice nor appointment; but merely recognition of the possession of spiritual gift and endowment. Recognition not by the *pastors*, as amongst us, but by the Church; not by a single *Independent* church, but by the *whole* Church, wherever its members might be gathered together. And how simple are the means employed by the disciples, who had enjoyed, for a season, the advantage of the gifts and ministry of Apollos, to extend the same benefits to their brethren, when his mind was disposed by the Lord to visit other churches for their edification.

I must not, however, here omit an argument I have heard advanced in favour of the right of the Church to choose its own pastors and teachers, drawn from the use of a Greek term. The word occurs twice in the New Testament, not at all in the Septuagint; and is used classically for mere appointment. The first place in which it is found in the New Testament is Acts xiv. 23, to express the appointment of elders by Paul and Barnabas; "when they had ordained (*χειροτονήσαντες*) them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting," &c. On the use of this term, Dr. Bloomfield, in his Greek Testament, has the following criticism:—"Doddridge

(and indeed all the Presbyterian commentators) take the sense to be, ‘having ordained their elders by the votes of the people.’ But the most learned interpreters have long rejected this interpretation; which requires a very strained sense to be put upon *χειροτονέω*—and one moreover which is forbidden by the *αὐτοῦς* (qu. *αὐτοῖς*) following. There is, indeed, no point on which the most learned have been so much agreed as this, that *χειροτονέω* here simply denotes ‘having selected,’ constituted, appointed.” *Προχειροτονέομαι* also is found, in Acts x. 41, in such a connexion as quite to fix this meaning:—*μάρτυσι τοῖς προκεχειροτονημένοις ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ*—“unto witnesses chosen before of God.” In addition to this, I may observe, that it is not only in the New Testament that the term must be understood to denote simply selected or chosen, &c.; but I find in Schleusner an instance given in which it is so employed by Demosthenes, who says, *Τὰς ἐμὰς γνώμας ἐχειροτόνει*, the translation of which is, “He chose my opinions.” The other place in which the term occurs in the New Testament is 2 Corinthians viii. 19:—“We have sent with him the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches; and not that only, but who was also chosen (*χειροτονηθεὶς*) of the churches to travel with us with this grace.” Here then, in the first place, there is one chosen to a merely secular business (to carry money) in which we have seen the church using its suffrages before; and in the next place it is not merely a church but *the churches* choosing: a very unfavourable instance of choice for an independent church, which cannot by any means allow another church to be joined with it in its

suffrages. Thus, the right of choice quite falls to the ground, so far as it is based upon the force of a Greek term. And I imagine it will be quite impossible to bring proof from scripture of any churches having chosen their own pastors, or any intimation that at any period this right should be exercised. I know it is often said, "Have we not as much right to choose our *minister* as we have to choose our physician or our lawyer? And I would reply, On the principles of Independency, undoubtedly you *have*; but on the authority of the New Testament it appears you *have not*. Of course, I cannot at all tell what right a man may exercise in the Church of God, except as I am taught it in the Word of God. It is pleasant to our minds, certainly, when we are *in* any system, to find an apparent sanction for it in the Word of God; and it is a most painful thing to see light from the same word by which our system or practice is condemned. But it is human weakness alone that induces any child of God *even to wish* the bearing of any scriptural truth to be different from what it is, or to shrink from any conclusions to which the simple interpretation of the book of his heavenly Father's counsels and wisdom would lead him.

Another point of practice amongst Independents, I wish to notice, is ordination,—ordination by the pastors of other churches, after any given church's choice of its own pastor. Ordination, however, in the sense of appointment to office, or under the idea of conferring any *power* to minister, I find disavowed by some of the most intelligent of the Independent ministers. Still, ordination services are very generally kept up; and the man is esteemed only "*half reverend*" who has not received the imposition of hands. A student from a dissenting academy, or an

IRREGULAR pastor, is never expected to administer (as it is called) the Lord's Supper, until he has been ordained. This is the more singular, because there is not, in fact, the slightest necessity for a minister,\* as a minister, to be present at the Lord's table at all. It is like the Passover, entirely a family feast, in which the priest had nothing to do or to judge, to direct or to administer. I do not wish to go at length into the question of ordination now, because I am sure the admission that there remains no power in the church to ordain, or to confer office, is fully established in the New Testament. And I would say, taking the Dissenter's own account of ordination, as *recognition* merely, there is not the least shadow of authority for calling together a number of pastors, and those often from great distances, and utter strangers to the man they RECOGNISE. But if it is to be done at all, (and I have no objection to offer), it could be better done (*far better and more scripturally done*) by the Christian brethren amongst whom the pastor is to pursue his labours. The contrary practice is entirely the result of a desire to establish and maintain a hierarchical power. I would, therefore, say it is not a healthful state of things, when such admissions as those I have alluded to are made to the *inquiring* mind, viz. that there is not an atom of authority in Scripture for ordination, *in the ordinary sense* of the term; and yet the *practice* is most solemnly continued; and "popular ministers" are going hundreds of miles, and churches are putting themselves to inconvenience and expense;—for what? For a decent ceremony! a comely service! in many minds, an absolute

\* I use the word *minister* here again merely in its popular sense.

delusion ! And now I am upon the subject of ordination, I would, in all love, just refer to the ordination of Paul and Barnabas, in Acts xiii. 2. “The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.” This, we perceive, was not the ordination of the brethren, but of the Holy Ghost ; nor was it to commence ministry, but to a particular piece of service. What a contrast, alas ! is here presented to the introductory discourse ; the questioning of the man to be ordained ; the charge to the pastor ; the elaborately pre-composed ordination prayer ; the discourse to the people, the ordination dinner ! But “when they *had fasted and prayed*, and laid their hands on them,” &c. It is with sorrow that I make these allusions to practices amongst my Dissenting brethren ; yet I do it out of love to the souls of men, and with a desire that nothing may be professed or practised in the Church of God, contrary to the mind of God, and grieving to the Holy Ghost.

Plurality of elders and liberty of ministry, I have already spoken of as of Divine authority, by the word of God ; and I suppose many brethren among the Independents would not dispute the correctness of this position as a *doctrine*, however reluctant they might be to reduce it to practice. For the universal practice is, to shut up all eldership in the person of one man,\* and all liberty of teaching to the appointed minister, however slender his gifts, or of whatever character they may be. An Independent minister is pastor, and evangelist, and teacher,

\* Co-pastorships are proverbially allowed to be *bad* things ; and no one becomes involved in them from choice, but necessity.



and ruling-elder, and exhorter, and, in fact, every thing in the shape of ministry, however varied and opposite the qualifications may be that are required for its effectual discharge. The result of this utter subversion of the order of the Spirit, and the substitution of man's systems in its stead, is seen in the unhappiness and burdened spirits of the most favoured pastors, and in the unfed, untended, weak, discontented, and wretched state of the flocks. The liberty of ministry, of which I have spoken, as now the Holy Spirit's means for the edification of the body of Christ, was recognised and practised in the Jewish synagogues (restrictive as the Judaic system was), in a degree to which the church is an entire stranger in the present day. How simple and how refreshing is that instance recorded in Acts xiii. 14, "When they (Paul and his company) departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." One feels, in reading this simple narration, an entire unbinding of the swathes in which he has been enveloped by the stiff formalities of modern systems and restrictions.

Looking, then, beloved brethren, at the principles and practices of Dissent, and of Independency especially, as they are developed in a system, I find many things most contrary to the Word of God, and entirely injurious to the Church of God; as every thing must of necessity be that hinders and grieves the Holy Spirit, shuts out his gifts, and refuses to submit to his guidance. I most readily acknowledge, that there are very many laborious

and excellent men, as ministers, connected with the system \*; and there are also many devoted Christians in the aggregate of the Dissenting Churches: still I am compelled to acknowledge that Independency and practical Dissent, as a system, is but a modification of *worldliness*, in opposition to that *purely spiritual* character, which, in the New Testament, attaches to all the acknowledged principles and practices in the Church of God.

My reasons for judging the great bodies of Dissent in this country, as well as the Church of England, to be in their corporate capacity in a state of apostasy, are of the most painful, and at the same time of the most conclusive kind. For, while the very *form* of the Establishment of this country is openly and confessedly before all men based upon a worldly compact, and is just a system of secular patronage, the great bodies of the Dissenters, and especially the Independents, protesting against all human authority in the Church of God, and declaring its entirely spiritual character, have fallen upon a system professedly based upon the New Testament—and in which there is much abstract truth—but which, at the same time, in its practical working, is thoroughly pervaded and animated by the spirit of worldliness. Of the Dissenters *as a body*—taking away the few, the very few, truly spiritual persons to be found in the most, perhaps in every one of their churches—it may be said with painful truth, that “having the form of godliness, they deny the power thereof.” In sad confirmation of this position,

\* And there are many most laborious clergymen connected with the Establishment; but that does not mend the utter evil and corruption of the *system*.

I may commence at the very basis-principle and starting-point of Independency. This principle will not, if strictly and accurately examined by the spiritual mind, be found to be a principle recognised by the Word of God. I am sure I am not misrepresenting Independency, which I desire to try by God's Word, when I say *it is based more on strong views of civil and religious liberty, than on a simple view of the believer's duty to be wholly submissive and obedient to the will of God.* Independency is reared on the lofty pedestal of "the right of private judgment" in the things of God, rather than on the lowly foundation of unqualified, unlimited, and entire *obedience* to the Word of God. I should be sorry to be misunderstood here; and what I would say is this: God's Word does not represent to us "the *right*" we have to judge for ourselves in matters of religion, or talk to us about "liberty of conscience," and "the inalienable right to judge for himself," which, in the province of religion, every man possesses; but it teaches us our *duty to obey* God: it speaks to us of our blindness by nature, and our utter ruin; and it tells us of God's Word as our guide, and teaches us that there is the utmost reason that we should walk according to it, since we shall infallibly be judged by it at last. This is the only safe principle on which a Christian can stand in relation to the things of God: and it is nothing but sin that ever removes the mind from this principle. For even though the abstract truths themselves should be absolutely coincident, there is the utmost difference in their effect upon the mind, according as they are viewed as independent *rights*, or principles of truth coming from

the source of all authority and demanding an unqualified submission and *obedience*.

“Nothing but sin can draw a man out of this principle (of obedience); the doing our own will is always sin,—always the acting of the old man, not ‘subject to God,’ or it would do His will, not its own,—the nature which does not bring in God, but acts for itself. The object of obedience may be in question; but self-will is always wrong. Thus Peter, when charged before the High Priest’s council with disobedience to their behests, does not plead a right to do his own will,—a right to do what he pleased: he had no such right as towards God; it would have been the expression of self-will; he would not have been honouring God therein. His word was not, ‘I have a right to do what I like without reference to you,’ but, ‘We ought to obey God rather than men.’ It would have really been disobedience to have obeyed them; God would have been disobeyed in the result: he would have acquiesced, yea, taken a leading part in disobedience, as far as he was concerned. Thus we find how the principle is preserved, in all the trying circumstances of refusing subjection to human authority. It can be swerved from in no instance without breaking through the first and only principle of accepted relationship to God: it is the only exercise, save praise, of life to God. It appears to me, that this principle is greatly lost sight of, and abused by all religious parties. As to this, they are divided into two great classes,—those who plead obedience, and those who plead liberty. Peter’s answer seems to me to meet both. The Dissenters, as a body, plead liberty—rights

—the title to do, as regards men, what they please. The Churchmen claim obedience, and plead frequently the principle; but it is still to *men*, and not to God. ‘We ought to obey God,’ is the Christian’s answer to both. ‘We ought *to obey*,’ I say to the Dissenter who claims rights,—‘we ought to *obey God* :’ to the Churchman, who pleads the principle of obedience in the defence of all the corruptions which rest merely on the authority of man and his ways, ‘We ought to obey God rather than men.’ How perfect is Scripture in setting in order the ways of men,—the narrow path which no other power detects, as revealing the principles of the human mind, and judging them. Self-will is never right: obedience to man is often wrong—disobedience to God.”

But beyond this, the practical working of the system is such as to convince every one who is in a position to look at its secret springs and movements, that far other principles are at work than those which meet the eye of him who sees only results, or contemplates merely the movements of the machinery from without. The secret management,—the balancing of hostile forces,—and the weight of property and influence, in connexion with Dissenting churches, are most painful indications that the rule and guidance of God’s Spirit are not depended on in the practical working of the system. It is, in fact, in most cases, just an effort of man’s wisdom and prudence to keep things fair and smooth to the eye without, while there is little else but a struggle, with anxiety, and distrust, and vexation within.

The right of a Church to choose its own pastors and teachers, &c. has been shown from Scripture to be entirely

invalid ; but, for a moment, conceding the principle, what is the practice, in many instances, resulting from it? I suppose no one would contend for the extension of this right beyond the members of the Church, or the professedly-spiritual men. This may be the theory ; but it is an exceedingly common thing, in practice, to join all the seat-holders, irrespective of their spiritual character, with the members of the Church in the exercise of their suffrages in this important point. In almost every case, even where the principle of a pure election is ostensibly maintained, the subscribers to the " cause " are indirectly consulted. In speaking of the practical violation of this assumed right, I have no wish to go into details ; for these are of a nature only to darken the soul : and it can be little satisfactory to follow out the operation of a principle, the mere assumption of which is a practical denial of the supremacy and rule of the Holy Ghost in the Church, and an attempt to exercise a power which emphatically and exclusively belongs to the Holy Ghost, " who divideth to every man severally as he will."

But were every thing as practically sound, as it is unsound, in this matter of choice or election, what are the leading motives of choice, and the considerations, in connexion with the minister to be chosen? Every one knows that, though piety is assumed to be a necessary qualification in the candidate for the pastoral office, yet it is certainly not *that* qualification which is most prominent in the minds of many of the choosing-people ; it is " a man of talent " they want ; a man of talent, in proportion to the respectability of the church, or, in other words, in proportion to the church's possession of the

means by which, it is assumed, perhaps rightly, that talent is to be procured; a man, doubtless, that *may* convert souls, and may be able to teach and rule the Church of God,—but, *necessarily*, a man whose popular style of address, or strength of intellect, or reputation for learning, shall command the homage of the world, or the unconverted; that they also may be induced to join in the worship of the religious people. The great object to be obtained is, the attraction of the world, and that by the exhibition of something which the world can appreciate; that the chapel may be filled, a respectable congregation gathered, and the pecuniary responsibilities of the place, such as the minister's salary, and the outward arrangements of the building and services, &c., may be easily met. Then, on the other hand, the preacher-elect (for one cannot, with any propriety, call him either pastor, or evangelist, or teacher), ordinarily, I do not say universally, stipulates for a certain amount of salary, or, in default of this, calculates on the increase of his temporal means, as his ministry may attract additional seat-holders, or subscribers to his place: and his standing, in the body with which he is connected, is measured by the numbers and the respectability of the congregation he can gather around him. It is a matter of fact, that a Dissenting minister is honored by his brethren, much more in proportion to the strength of his intellect (intellect is the supreme object of admiration of the Dissenters) and the respectability of his congregation, and the amount of subscriptions raised by *his* flock for the religious and benevolent institutions of the day, than for his devotion to the cause of his Lord, or the self-denial he exhibits in

his labours for the conversion of souls to Christ and the building up of the Church of God. Energy, for aught I know, may *naturally* command respect; but no one can help seeing how exceedingly a few worldly-adjuncts influence the feelings of one toward another in that which professes to be God's spiritual and unworldly Church. Nothing but spirituality and spiritual gift *ought*, for a moment, to be looked at in the Church. It never was designed that any thing which is of value in the world, should be valued in the Church. Another thing, which is entirely of the world, and opposite to the very genius of the gospel and the express declarations of the Spirit, is to be seen in the character of the preaching of the present day, and especially that which prevails, and is esteemed amongst Dissenters. It is not the simple and wholesome truth of the gospel which is sought after (the edifying of the Church is still more out of the question) from week to week, by the large congregations that are gathered together, especially in this metropolis; but it is the *garniture* of truth, if I may so speak, the mere drapery in which it is adorned, that attracts the admiring gaze. If intellect be at work; if there be the flow of fervid eloquence, or the display of logical acumen; if man's wisdom or philosophy be set forth, or the pictures of imagination, chaste and vivid, are made to pass in rapid succession before the minds of the listening multitude—it is well; and he who has furnished forth the intellectual repast, is repaid by the incense of flattery, and is suffered to take his place for a season, in his little niche, amongst the other idols of popular applause. How often, beloved brethren, is the Cross of Christ erected



merely to become the pedestal of the preacher's fame! an exhibition most sad for the believing mind to contemplate, and greatly resulting from the utterly wrong position of the Church of God.\* In connexion with this subject, I may appeal to the consciences of some who are not unhonored, as ministers, amongst us, whether they have not known what it is to shrink from engaging in services in their own accustomed places, and to make sudden arrangements with some brother for an exchange of pulpits, merely from the dread that, through lack of spirits, or mental weariness, they would be esteemed *flat* by their congregations, and as "falling below *themselves*." Many of my brethren know how painful a thing it is to have, as *preachers*, a CHARACTER to maintain; and how wasting is the anxiety, and ceaseless the effort to maintain, at its flood, the tide of popular applause.

How opposite is all this to the character which the Apostle Paul, by the Holy Ghost, gives of his own preaching! He says (1 Cor. i. & ii.) "Christ sent me . . . . . to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the Cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

\* This position is the result, in a great measure, of the Church having lost sight of the true spirituality of its character, and having, in fact, lost the spirituality itself. Instead of seeking to present such an aspect to the world, as worldly men can admire, its grand distinction is, that its principles are so high, and its worship so spiritual, that the principles cannot be understood, nor the worship joined in, by any unspiritual or unconverted man. The worship of the Church is that in which alone the Church can engage; its position and work in the world is to testify of Christ, and against the world, and to call sinners, by the voice of the evangelist, and the power of the Spirit, *out* of the world, which is condemned by God and under the entire power of Satan, into the liberty of sons of God and the kingdom of God's dear Son.

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. . . . . But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God, for I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

Another point which convinces me of the entirely wrong position of the Independent Churches is, the

almost entire absence of pastorship amongst them. The ministry of the Word, or, indeed, I might say, the mere work of the Evangelist, which attracts the attention of the world, as having to do especially with the unconverted, is that which is most valued amongst us, and is all, for the most part, that the flock obtains. The teacher of the *church* is rarely found; the pastor more seldom still,—and no wonder; for man's system has so arranged, that if the one chosen-minister has not all the qualifications which the Holy Spirit may distribute to many of the members for the edification of the body, the Church, or the body, must suffer the loss, and the Spirit's gifts be of no practical avail. I would, with great earnestness and affection, press upon the consideration of brethren in Christ amongst the Dissenters, that picture of pastorship presented in 1 Thess. ii. 5—13, “Neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness: nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, *even as a nurse cherisheth her children*: so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe: as ye know how we exhorted, and comforted and charged every one of you,

as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory." Now, from this beautiful description of pastorship, one of these two things is quite evident, either these Churches must have been very small indeed, or they must have had *many pastors*, and the pastor must have given himself especially to care for the sheep. I am almost afraid to present the thought of my mind in connexion with the illustration of Paul's care for the flock of God, drawn from the tender care of a nurse toward her children, lest I should be thought to trifle with sacred things. But imagine a single nurse, or a mother, having to foster and cherish a hundred, or two hundred, or even five hundred, or a thousand children—the number of members, toward whom many Independent pastors sustain the character of spiritual nurses! Can we wonder at the sadly-neglected state of the children? Can we be surprised at the weakness of the flock? Again, in Paul's address to the Ephesian elders, how affecting is the contrast to these apostolic exhortations, presented in every part of the Church of God in the present day, and that not always from the want of piety and energy, but, in many cases, from the mere wrongness of position into which every thing has been thrown, and the substitution of man's order and wisdom, for the wisdom and order of the Holy Ghost; human wisdom making one man an entire system, and the wisdom of the "Holy Spirit dividing to every man severally as he will," and seeking "the edification of the body, through that which every joint and band supplies." The apostle says (Acts xx. 17—20) "Ye know from the first day I came into Asia,

after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews ; and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you and have taught you publickly and from house to house." Verse 28th, "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves and to all the flock, over the which the *Holy Ghost* hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood: for I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them ; therefore watch and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to *God* and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver or gold, or apparel; yea, ye yourselves know, that *these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me*. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Here the Apostle teaches the elders and pastors what they ought to be as pastors, by describing what he was as a pastor himself. And certainly, in every thing but his inspiration, the Apostle of the Gentiles is but a fair example of what every Christian pastor should be. Nay, .

Christ, who gave his life for the sheep, has proposed himself as our pattern:—and in that very instance in which we should have imagined we were freed from the obligation of imitating him. “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; *and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*”

The next thing I would glance at, as a proof of the spirit of worldliness in the dissenting churches, is the influence exerted by men of property. Pre-eminence is conceded in the church to the possession of property as well as in the world; and it would be deemed a strange thing by the rich man, if his opinions were not more deferred to than those of his poorer brethren; and if his station in the world, and the amount of his contributions were not acknowledged as, in some degree, to regulate the measure of respect he might naturally look to receive in the church: that is to say, mere worldly distinctions, which are utterly set aside by the Lord Jesus Christ in connexion with his kingdom, are taken notice of, and made the grounds of distinction and honour, in a very high degree, in dissenting churches, as well as in professedly more worldly communities. The spirit of that exhortation of the Holy Ghost, so comforting to the poor disciple, and so wholesome to the rich, is rarely, if ever pressed upon the consciences of the members of dissenting churches, “Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted; but the rich, in that he is made low; because as the flower of grass he shall pass away” (James i. 9, 10). Many indeed of the dissenting churches are entirely ruled by some worldly-spirited “Diotrephes, loving to have the preeminence;” and

whose only title to preeminence is founded in his being able to live in a better house than some others, to keep more servants, to furnish a more costly table, or perhaps to drive a carriage, or to be possessed of some piece of the vanity of this world, which others do not value or do not possess. The influence of deacons also amongst us is another proof of the radical evil of the system. Their office is confessedly that of *servants* of the church; their actual position is that of *masters*. Their duty, it is admitted on all hands, is to "serve tables," and to minister in faithfulness, as stewards, the temporal affairs of the church; their position and aim are, in most instances, to rule both the pastor and the flock. Instead of their service being merely a secular stewardship, it is erected by the system into a sort of spiritual episcopate, having often to do with the appointment of ministry in the Church, and the regulation of "supplies," as they are termed, in the pastor's temporary absence from his flock; and being always, I believe, the acting bishops when death, or removal, brings the Church to the position of requiring a new appointment to office. But, for the full exemplification of this evil, I refer to Mr. James's "Church Member's Guide," as presenting a fair exposition of the practical evil of this point of the system, connected with a pungency of remark, which his station, and years, and practical knowledge, quite entitle him to employ. It is Mr. James who says, "If we have not *Lords* bishops amongst us, we have *Lords* deacons;" to the truth of which, every dissenter in his heart responds. Another evil, of a very grievous character, common to all the Dissenters is, the recognition of a distinct *order* of men,

as the clergy—*clergy* in position, and assumption, and in every thing, but the name ;—and who, though not shut out from the exercise of any secular calling by certain canons, as in the Established Church, are, nevertheless, very generally restrained by conventional usage, and by the idea that it would be degrading to their function, and contrary to the dignity of a minister, to be found labouring with their own hands, or engaged in trade. Now, there are two evils which necessarily arise out of this : one is the temptation that is presented to worldly motives, motives of pride, desire of distinction, the love of gentility, as well as the prospect (if successful) of a respectable support, to induce men to desire the office of the ministry of the Word amongst us. And another is, to necessitate the minds of those engaged in ministry to be looking at the temporal condition of their hearers, as forming the measure and basis of their trust for support. And out of this position, naturally and necessarily, arise the arrangements of pew rents and pew subscriptions, &c. for which, I see no more countenance in the New Testament than for tithes, which are so obnoxious to a Dissenter's mind. Nay, more than this ; tithes were, at one period, the divinely-appointed means of support for the ministry ; I mean the ministry of the priests and Levites at the Temple of Jerusalem. But nowhere do I hear of *payment* for a place to sit in, in the temple, in the synagogue, in the upper room at Jerusalem, in the school of Tyrannus, or in Paul's own hired house. Utterly unscriptural is this arrangement for the support of those who have "addicted themselves to the ministry of the Word ;" whose special direction is, "*freely* ye have



received, therefore *freely* give." An arrangement so entirely repugnant to the spirit of the gospel, one would imagine, could never be tolerated for a moment by a simple and spiritual mind, did we not know how powerful is the influence of the long-accustomed presence of evil, and its extended adoption, to blunt the moral perceptions! One exceedingly glaring evil in the system of seat-rents, is seen in shutting out the poor from hearing the gospel at all;—and even where this is met, by the provision of free seats, this very arrangement is, as to the Church, censured in the strongest terms by the Holy Ghost, and marked as a character of apostasy, in James ii. 1—4; "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a *gold ring, in goodly apparel*, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?"

If a church, or a chapel, is, as it is sometimes called, "the House of God," then how shall any demand payment for a place in *that* house? Will men sell that which is God's? If it be a place set apart for the preaching of the gospel to sinners, then are they not to be invited to come and *hear* of the blessings of salvation from man, as well as *receive* them from God, "without money and without price?" If it be the meeting-place of the Church, then is the principle to be allowed, amongst brethren in Christ, that a good place shall be assigned to

one who has money to purchase the distinction of a pew, and an inferior place apportioned to him who, though dear to Christ, is so like his Master in his earthly condition, that if he desired such a distinction, he has not the means of procuring it? "Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seat," &c.? I have not forgotten the provision God has ordained for those who preach the gospel, and for those who give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. This, however, is not seat-rents; but it is the grace of God, in the hearts of believers, who, having "reaped the spiritual things," are called upon, by God himself, to impart of their "carnal things," as the pressure of need may require. And for all the exigences of the Church, and for its carrying on a testimony to the world, I see this simple provision made by God, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store (not a stated sum, but) *as God hath prospered him.*"

Every true-hearted minister of Jesus Christ, who is called of God to preach the gospel, has this warrant for his support: "So hath God ordained that they who preach the gospel *shall live* of the gospel." This is God's own constitution; nor will he suffer it, when rested in with simplicity, to fail. This does not of necessity apply to elders, or pastors, who are stationary in the Church of God. It may be the Church's *advantage* to prevent the necessity of their labouring, when the

Church is large and the pastors are few, and their circumstances are not such as to render them entirely independent; but it does not seem to be altogether a *duty*.

I know it will be objected here, that the contributions of the people attending Dissenting chapels are free-will offerings, by whatever name they may be called. But this is by no means true, in fact, as the quarterly notices, either by writing or announcement of "seat-subscriptions, &c. being *due*," sufficiently attests. Any person occupying a sitting, or a pew, regularly, in any of the Dissenting chapels, would feel bound in honour to pay his "seat-rent," as much as he would the rent of his house. And if he did not pay, his name would stand as a defaulter on the deacon's or manager's books. But beyond this, there are arrangements made effectually to secure the due payment of seat-rents by the occupants in *some* of the chapels of this metropolis, by a percentage given to the collector; and connected with a large recently-opened Independent chapel, whose pastor is possessed of considerable property, one of the *deacons*, I am told by a member of the Church there, receives 2½ per cent. for this service. Now there are many practical evils arising out of these arrangements, which might not perhaps at first strike the mind of one long connected with the working of the system, or unaccustomed narrowly to scrutinize the springs of human feeling, and the great difficulty of maintaining, in the most favourable circumstances, the heart free from the influence of worldly circumstances, and an earthly bias in the service of the Lord. The natural effect upon the discipline of any church

under such arrangements will at once be manifest. I well knew a case of church discipline, in which the subject of the discipline got privately conveyed to the minister an intimation, that if the investigation proceeded thirty persons would leave the chapel: in other words, the amount of their subscriptions would be withdrawn from the pastor's support. It is not enough to say, a minister, of course, ought to be above attending to an appeal made to such motives; but rather, the fact that it is *possible* such an appeal can at any time be made, is a sufficient proof that the honour of the Lord Jesus Christ has been carried into a position where it ought never to have been placed. Imagine, for a moment, somebody at Corinth telling Paul that if he insisted on the incestuous person being put away, thirty persons would withdraw their subscriptions! But there is another evil arising from the same source, inasmuch as the mind of the pastor so circumstanced is turned away from right objects to the frequent consideration of those which are earthly and base. This is manifest in the character of the reply which is almost universally given to the question, "How such a minister, or such another is getting on?" The reply to such a question almost invariably relates to the attendance at the chapel, the number of sittings that are let, the difficulty of getting a seat, or the prospect of a flourishing and respectable *cause* being raised or maintained. Could one, for a moment, think of such a thing as Timothy, or Titus, or Apollos, in answer to Paul's inquiries concerning the work of the Lord in the churches they had visited, saying, "Nearly all the sittings are let, and there is the

prospect of a very respectable congregation, in such and such a place;" instead of speaking of souls gathered to the Lord, or the saints of the Lord walking in the obedience of faith, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost?

Another sad and convincing proof to my own mind, that the Dissenters, as a body, have not escaped the general apostasy of the professing Church, is found in the fact, that there are in the New Testament certain sins marked out by the Holy Ghost as subjecting the offender to excommunication, which neither Churchman nor Dissenter would allow could be made the subjects of the discipline of the Church at all now. The cases to which I especially allude are presented in 1 Cor. v. 9—13. "I wrote to you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the *covetous* or *extortioners*, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is *called a brother* be a fornicator, or *covetous*, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an *extortioner*; with such an one, no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." I take up here merely the case of *covetousness*; a sin which the Holy Ghost marks out as subjecting a man to the very severest infliction of the discipline of the Church of God; the subject of which is declared to be an idolater, and to have no inheritance in the kingdom

of Christ and of God. There is no mystery about the term "covetous," or "covetousness," any more than there is about "fornication," or "railing," with which it is coupled in the passage quoted. Every one knows that covetousness is "the inordinate *desire* of money," or "the *eagerness* of gain;" that is Johnson's definition, and it is exceedingly plain. Now what am I to think when I take up Mr. Harris's book, entitled "Mammon," and find this position assumed and established, "covetousness *the* sin of the professing Church?" How would it have struck the mind if, instead of "covetousness," it had been "drunkenness," or "fornication," *the* sin of the professing Church? For, in fact, covetousness is placed side by side with these sins; and a more distinct assurance of his coming doom is given to the covetous man than to the associates in sin with whom he is coupled. What will the purest Churches say to this? When did ever any Independent or Dissenting Church separate a member from its communion merely for the sin of covetousness? How entirely is the apostasy of the Church from its original and true position involved in the declaration that we cannot discover or obtain proof of the sin of covetousness now! All I would say here is, let those who acknowledge this (acknowledge that a sin marked out for excommunication when the Scriptures of the New Testament were written, cannot be discovered or made the subject of discipline at all now), ponder well what is implied in the admission with regard to the position of every section of the professing Church in which such admission must be made! The sin is *marked* by the Spirit of God; the Church was *once*

in a position to discover it; and I leave it to the conscience of every soul anxious for the honour of Christ to supply the rest.

I might here advert to the political spirit into which the Dissenters, as a body, have so grievously fallen, and which I feel to be so entirely opposed to the spirit of discipleship to Christ, and so entirely inconsistent in men whose main position is founded upon the declaration of Christ, "My kingdom is not of this world." But my heart is pained at the evil that has already passed under my sorrowful review; and I feel quite disposed to let pass what I might have offered on the utter impossibility of maintaining separation from the world involved in the very position of a Dissenting minister, as standing in the system of practical independency; as well as any notice of the unscriptural principles at the basis of their collegiate institutions, and in the constitution and working of the religious societies of the Dissenters, as well as those more immediately connected with the Established Church. The Lord knows, I have no wish to dilate on the sad, sad conformity to this world, with which many true Christians, as well as the mass of mere religious professors, stand chargeable before Him who hath said, by his Holy Spirit, "Be not conformed to this world;" and "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." It produces nothing but sadness in my soul, when I reflect how seldom it is that my brethren in the ministry of the Word (to whom the Lord has really imparted grace), whether in the Establishment or out of it, call their

flocks to separation from the world, or teach them that it is a Christian's duty to pursue business only to that extent which is compatible with the supreme consecration of the soul to God,—for *necessity*, and not for wealth or aggrandisement; and that to stand entirely aloof from all the pleasures and honours of "this present evil world" is absolutely demanded by the conditions of discipleship to Him who, himself rejected and crucified by the world, hath said, "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily; and let him follow me." Alas! brethren, how few preachers, when taking up the words of the Apostle Paul, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," dare in seriousness to add, that which the Apostle immediately adds, "by whom (or whereby) the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world!"—or, if such a thing were *said* in the pulpit, how fearfully would it be contradicted out of it! Alas! there is but little crucifixion to the world manifested by Christians, who are in love with the moral culture and civilization that infidels are carrying on, and can take pleasure in adorning their houses with costly furniture, can enter with the keenest zest into the arena of worldly politics; who are quite *au fait* at all the ways of worldly intrigue and refinement,—are found dressing out their children in the gaiety and fashion of the world, and instead of inculcating simplicity of life and habits, encouraging the imitation of the refinements of the world and its *recherché* tastes. Who, in going into the habitation of Christians generally in this day, would be reminded of the passage, "had not where to



lay his head"? What is a *Christian*? Is he not a follower of Christ? Is it allowed to take the blessings of Christ's redemption without an imitation of his example, "who left us an example, that we should tread in his steps"?

I do "not rejoice in iniquity;" I grieve and mourn over it. I have only judged the evil by the light of God's Word, and have acted on that judgment before the Lord. I have endeavoured to "purge out the old leaven" in the system with which I have been connected during my whole life; but finding myself utterly destitute of the power, I have felt myself constrained to withdraw from the evil I found it impossible to correct; feeling, as I do, assured of the truth of the declaration, "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." The immediate circumstances and steps of that secession come more properly under the head of the next chapter.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### CONSIDERATIONS ADDRESSED ESPECIALLY TO CHRISTIAN BROTHERS AT ISLINGTON CHAPEL.

IN entering on this part of my work, dear brethren, I feel a strange tumult in my soul; for the Lord is my witness, that the love I have felt toward you in the gospel of Jesus Christ, during the course of my ministry amongst you, and which you have, I believe, reciprocated, remains undiminished. Indeed I may say it is exceedingly increased, for "God is my record how

greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." I feel therefore a necessity laid upon me, at this point, not only to watch that nothing but truth be spoken, in the spirit of love, but also that strength of affection does not lead me to withhold any thing which might be needful for the interests of truth and the honour of Jesus. For, dear brethren, the bond that has united us together, I feel to be far different from that of having met to worship God in the same material building; and therefore that bond remains in all its strength, although conscience towards God and man has recently compelled me, almost destroyed by the system, voluntarily to quit that building in which we have for some time been accustomed to meet for edification.

And I entreat you not to do yourselves and me that wrong, and the love which has subsisted between us that injury, as to imagine for a moment that in leaving Islington chapel I have contemplated giving up the care of your souls. Dear brethren, I have *not left* you, I am still dwelling amongst you; I am still ministering, as the Lord gives me ability and strength, at Chadwell-street Chapel; I still view myself as a pastor to you, and am still yours to serve in the Lord. The *building* which I have left I treat as a mere accident, a thing which might occur twenty times over in the course of our lives, without in the slightest degree weakening the bond of our connexion in Jesus Christ. This building, of course, I should not have left, if the conditions on which alone it could be *legally* and honourably held had not contravened your liberty and mine in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and in the Church of God. I have left Islington Chapel, therefore, just

on the same grounds that I would leave my dwelling-house, if there were any clauses in the lease, or conditions in the tenure, which restrained my liberty to serve God in my family according to the New Testament of Jesus Christ. But of this it is my purpose to speak a word or two by and bye. It is not necessary to go into any lengthened detail of circumstances connected with our union, as pastor and people, prior to the time of my seeing it right to relinquish my legal tenure of Islington Chapel. For I may say, you have "fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose and faith," since my lot was cast amongst you; and it is my consolation to know, through the grace of God, I have a witness in many of your hearts and consciences. This then shall suffice; and I will at once, as the Lord may enable me, present some considerations tending to explain the position in which we find ourselves standing toward one another. One great argument, dear friends, urged by you and other Christians in the neighbourhood, against my leaving the position of Independent Pastor of Islington Chapel is, my "great usefulness,"—"the great success of my ministry,"—"the prosperous state of the Church,"—"the steady increase of the congregation, and the number of persons that have been awakened by my preaching to a state of inquiry." These are your own expressions; and I confess that no argument weighed so heavily on my soul as this. But, beloved brethren, admitting the full force of this representation about success and usefulness, I cannot see how in the least, it is to be admitted as an argument to continue the tenure of a building felt to be contrary to the mind of God, and where I could not maintain a

conscience void of offence toward God and toward men. You will, I am sure, see how this principle of "usefulness," and this plea that "we must not lose our usefulness for scruples," may be employed to hold men in bondage to popery, or any other system of gross error. I have only to say, brethren, there is such a thing as *conscience* in the things of God, as well as in our transactions with men.

But, dear friends, I begin to suspect the correctness of the position you have assumed, about all this usefulness going on amongst us. I mean in degree only, of course; not, indeed, because you have not followed me in the step I have taken: this you ought not to have done, until you were satisfied of its accordance with the word of God; but because you have simply and unqualifiedly refused to hear the reasons which your Pastor wished, in the simplicity of truth, to set before you, to satisfy your minds of the scripturalness of the position he has taken. I would not press this matter too painfully on your consciences; because I know you were alarmed by reports and representations from quarters whence you justly looked for truth instead of falsehood. I do not mean, of course, intentional falsehood; nor do I now refer to any persons amongst yourselves, but to others who are *without*. Still it is a little strange, and shows the wonderful power of system over the mind, that when your own Pastor had stated to you that his doctrines were unchanged,—his principles those on which he had been acting, as far as he could, for three years—that he had no new truth to set before you, but only to show that acknowledged truths should have power over the

conscience and practice—you should refuse to hear him for a single Lord's day, or invite him to state his reasons on the week-day, when he had voluntarily given to you the legal power of the place, and left it to you to invite him or otherwise.

For you will all remember that I distinctly stated to you, though my conscience would not allow me to retain that possession of Islington Chapel which the law of the land secured to me, in consequence of your invitation (and which, of course, I could have retained during my own pleasure, if that had been the rule of my conduct), I was quite willing to preach for you as I had done (during three years) for three or four Lord's days, and on the week days to set before you, in full, all the principles and reasons connected with my relinquishment of the charge of Islington Chapel.

I do not accuse you of unkindness toward me in this matter; but I do grieve that you are so misled by that system, into which I have been the means of introducing many of you, and by my own example and instructions and influence have fixed you down. But let no one after this tell me of the abruptness of my leaving you; a month's continuance might have softened that down. Nor let any one be so deceived as to tell me the people at Islington Chapel were prepared to model every thing after my wishes, if I would but have continued amongst them. Why, dear friends, neither your love to the *truth*, nor your love to *me*, was strong enough to induce you to invite me to preach a single sermon, when I had left it to your pleasure to invite me or not. This is a simple matter of fact, on whatever principles it may be

explained. I explain it by the power of system, which often overbears every other consideration. As to any change in my doctrinal sentiments, or views on the principles of church-government requiring this refusal, I have merely to say, you *know*, dear brethren, that the views I have stated in the former chapters, are those which I have preached and taught with greater or less clearness during the three years of my ministry amongst you. The priesthood of believers—the unscriptural distinction of clergy and laity—liberty of ministry—the simple principle of the communion of saints—the unscripturalness of seat-rents—plurality of elders are no new doctrines at Islington Chapel; and many of you can bear me witness what efforts I have made to model things amongst you after this order. A year ago, you will remember, I gave my full sanction and concurrence to a brother, who left us to be united with a few Christians meeting in simplicity, and partaking of the Lord's Supper without any *ordained* pastor to *administer* it; so that against the charge of a change of views, and of precipitancy of judgment, I make my appeal to many of your consciences; feeling perfectly satisfied that a verdict of acquittal must be registered there, as there is in my own conscience before the Lord. In connexion with the whole circumstances of change I am now speaking of, I may say, that long ago, in conjunction with one or two beloved brethren, a society was projected—it was the only plan that presented itself to our minds at that time—unitedly to testify, by periodical papers and by other means, against the sad departure of the whole of the professing Church from the simplicity of

Christ; which we all distinctly saw, but knew not how to remedy. Our society was named, in our intentions, "The Society of Reformed Pastors." We deemed, unitedly, I believe, union and organization necessary, in order to meet the array of hierarchical influence we might expect to be against us, in the ranks of the Dissenters as well as in the Established Church. Our society never came into actual operation, because I believe God's way is to call for individual responsibility, rather than organized effort; and it is to be feared we were calculating the adequacy of our own resources for this work, as if it were our own, instead of just following the path of individual rectitude, and leaving it to God to effect his purposes by the weakest of all human means.

But, lest any should imagine I have not most entirely stated the truth of the matter here, in relation to an alleged change of sentiments, I would say, I find, by a memorandum, that my first sermon at Islington Chapel, on the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, was preached in the month of October, 1837. Before that period, I quite admit, I did *not* preach with fulness and clearness the doctrine of the premillennial advent, and the personal reign of Christ on the earth during a thousand years of blessedness; I therefore, at once, give to those who would use it, this perfect admission of a change of doctrine on this subject,—a change which many more would experience, if, casting away the trammels of systematic divinity and adherence to the interpretations of commentators, they would study the Word of God for themselves, and only use that principle of interpretation, on this point, which is employed in connexion with the

*doctrines* of Christianity and the *accomplished* predictions connected with the first appearance, in his humiliation, of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But this much I may say on this point, that, whatever influence this view of divine truth, and of the glorious hope of the Church, may have had in the way of giving power to conscience, and imperatively demanding a separation from all evil, which will be shaken and destroyed by the Lord's coming, it has not, in itself, constituted, in the least degree, the ground of my retiring from Islington Chapel: that ground is to be found alone in the character of the trust-deed; to this point, therefore, I briefly turn. I have been told repeatedly, that there is nothing in this trust-deed contrary to the New Testament, or, at least, nothing in it that would prevent the Church assembling in Islington Chapel, being regulated by the principles of the New Testament. This question may be reduced within an exceedingly brief compass, by a reference to the legal document. I have only to say, that if its conditions ordained nothing contrary to the New Testament, then is there not the slightest ground of appeal to it, since, on the matter in question, the authority of the one and the other would be identical: but it is not so; and if I had not, in conjunction with the brethren associated with me, acted directly contrary, in many things, to the conditions of the trust-deed, I must have retired long since. Two years ago, after a conversation with the trustee, I wrote down the facts of the case, for my future guidance, which I will here transcribe.

“The trust-deed is exceedingly objectionable, viz. by



instituting officers that are not recognized by the New Testament, and rendering the office of deacon merely nominal, and entirely subsidiary to that of manager. It gives the managers (in conjunction with the pastor, who is a manager for the time being) unlimited power over the place and all its financial arrangements; it clogs the choice of the minister with many technical conditions; admits the seat-holders (however wicked) to equal power with the church-members, in the election of a pastor, puts the pastor almost entirely into the hands and power of the managers, and perpetuates the abuses which now exist. The only way in which relief can be obtained is, to procure a purchaser, either in the church, combining for the purpose, or some person consenting to purchase it for the church, and then getting the mortgagee, in a friendly manner, to foreclose the mortgage. The property being then sold, the trust-deed becomes void, when a new trust-deed may be provided, preserving the right of the choice of the minister to the church alone,\* and preserving the pastor from the odious power of the managers, the church, with its deacons, may act according to the rules of the New Testament, and manage, as they please, the house in which they worship."

I know, dear brethren, the trust-deed says nothing about deacons, and therefore some of the brethren have thought that deacons might be allowed; and assuredly deacons were chosen by the Church, under my direction; but then it was, because I cared neither for the managers

\* I do not see this right in scripture now; I did not see the absence of scriptural authority two years ago, when this paper was written.

nor for the trust-deed, but determined to adopt my own course, in spite of every obstacle ; this, however, God has shewn me, is not the spirit in which his Church is to be ruled. But though the trust-deed would allow the Church to *play* at making deacons—which will never satisfy an honest mind in connexion with the institutions of Christ, it, in fact, places all that power and responsibility in the hands of three managers which is, in all cases, in Independent churches, conceded to the deacons. And, however smoothly matters may go on while the manager is in a good humour, and chooses to concede his right, yet, as soon as ever a difference of judgment arises, the manager has the power to command the deacon to leave the vestry, he having not the slightest power to act against the legally-constituted officer, and having no power, can have, of course, no responsibility ; and, consequently, his office is just nothing more than a name. This is not at all, as some of you know, a mere *hypothetical* putting of the matter ; for a case in point actually occurred, not many years ago, in your own vestry, when the manager asserted his authority (and justly so, according to the deed), and the deacon was obliged to succumb. I do not blame the *person*, but I entirely object to the document ; and I say, *I* cannot stand where such an instrument can be enforced.\*

\* Now I am on the matter of trust-deeds, I would just say to my brethren amongst the Dissenting ministers, that as there has been, lately, much inquiry into the legal tenure of endowments and ecclesiastical buildings, it is necessary to be quite clear that they are on safe ground. This, I suppose, can hardly be the case in reference to many of the older chapels in London ; for it is not long since I heard a very intelligent London minister say, in the Congregational Library, that a great proportion of the trust-deeds of the older chapels were contravened.

Then, as to the arrangements of the place, they have, as you know, always been an objection to me, as utterly opposed to gospel simplicity. The organ, the graduated desks,—from the clerk's, upward to the pulpit,—the brass trellis-work, to separate the poor from the rich ; the gates, at the end of the aisles, effectually to shut out those who could not pay for a seat ; and, above all, the fact, that the floor of the chapel is made nine inches lower in the compartment appropriated to the poor (which has the effect, whether intended or not, of marking more effectually the distinction), and that at the greatest distance from the pulpit. All these things weighed heavily on my conscience ; and it was a grief to my soul that I should appear, for a moment, to be sanctioning such a system ; and, as you can bear me witness, I did not hesitate to speak of some of them in my public preaching, saying I could never read the Epistle of James to you, on account of its condemnatory sentence : and in private, long since, I told some of you, my own conviction was, that “ Lucifer was the real architect of the chapel, and that every arrangement in it was made for ostentation, rather than for use.” And, besides this, the necessity of a constantly recurring appeal to the *world*, in order to obtain money to meet the current expenses of a place professedly dedicated to the service of the church and the worship of God ; and also to support those institutions which some of you have called “ the glory of the place ” and the indications of the life of the church, was always a matter of deep grievance to my spirit. I could not, and I cannot now see, any thing but evil, any thing but that which is the dishonour of the Church, in asking

the world to contribute to the support of the worship of that God whom they hate, and that Saviour whom they despise. If the institutions of Islington Chapel, and elsewhere, are truly the glory of the Church, then let the Church support its own glory, and not ask the children of disobedience to help that which they must always hate and oppose. We can collect from another kind of circumstance, how every thing which is truly connected with christian responsibility and the glory of the Church, may be sustained, in this brief direction to Christians: "Upon the first day of the week, let every one lay by in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." And every thing connected with the Church which cannot be supported in this way, is supported in a way contrary to the mind of God, and involves an utter dereliction of their responsibility on the part of Christian professors; and, instead of being the glory, is the disgrace of the Church. How is it that Christians—(professed Christians, at least)—are found living in luxury, in nothing distinguished from the world, and retaining their thousands a year, and then giving a guinea or two per annum, as their proportion toward an enterprise, which they tell us is connected with the honor of Christ—the salvation of millions—the glory of the Church—and the bringing-in of the thousand years of blessedness and millennial glory; and then sending round the whole country to get the world to help them to do the rest. This I cannot understand, and therefore I cannot be connected with it.

The cause of my retiring from amongst you, then, has been entirely *conscience*—conscience injured and grieved

at being in a position where I must either dishonourably disregard and subvert the plain conditions of a legal document, and thus expose myself to the charge of unrighteousness before men, and the interference of the Court of Chancery,—or where I must consent to violate the commands of Jesus Christ, and continue to sanction, by my example and influence, a system of things which, in my soul, I felt to be contrary to the mind of God, as plainly presented to me in the order of the Church unfolded to me in the New Testament. I have, therefore, chosen, by God's help, to have a clear conscience at the price of whatever sacrifices it might involve, and have quietly retired from a position I could have maintained by law, in order to deliver, first, my own soul from evil, hoping that then, through the mercy of God, by the testimony of truth, I might be blessed in delivering your souls also. The principle of truth on which I have acted, is laid down in the words of the Holy Ghost—“Cease to do evil: learn to do well.” I have endeavoured to cease to do evil, as soon as I felt it to be evil, without “consulting with flesh and blood;” and I do humbly trust the Lord will now enable me, by his grace, “to learn to do well.”

I may now briefly put before you the steps of my secession, by a simple record of some circumstances that have not been fully understood by you all. The first *overt* act of secession which, in the train of circumstances, was connected with my retiring from Islington Chapel, was taken at Brunswick Chapel, Bristol. On the second Lord's-day in June, I was invited, in conse-

quence of the illness of the pastor of that place, to preach to his congregation in the morning; I reluctantly complied with the request, in consequence of ill health, and, from an indisposition to give pain to many there whom I highly esteemed as brethren in the Lord, which, I feared, might be the result of my declining to wear the gown, and to preach from the pulpit, as I had been accustomed to do. However, I had no opportunity to communicate with the brethren after I had complied with the invitation of Mr. Haines; and on Lord's-day morning I went to fulfil my engagement. I stated briefly, as soon as I reached the vestry, to the deacons, who were my personal friends, that I was not at liberty to wear the gown or to preach from the pulpit; but, if they pleased, I would speak, as God should enable me, from the clerk's desk, or platform. There were objections to this, as contrary to their order, as I, of course, anticipated; but before the hymn, with which the service commenced, was finished, they gave their consent that I should leave the gown and occupy the clerk's desk. I commenced by an exposition of the 1st Cor. ii. 14, and the following verses, and also the next chapter, intending to have preached afterwards from Heb. iii. 1, but my mind was so led on with the glorious truth presented in the portion for exposition, that, unconsciously to myself, the clock had reached the hour of twelve, when I received a pencil note from one of the deacons, requesting me to close the service with prayer, which, in a few minutes after, I did. In the vestry, afterward, the deacons, in a very christian manner, stated their conviction that I had not uttered any thing contrary to the Word of God or to the mind of the Spirit,

but they feared the edification of the people had been prevented by the derangement of the usual order.\*

The connexion between my act of secession at Bristol, in declining the pulpit and the gown, and the circumstances at Islington Chapel, is to be found in a letter written by the minister of Brunswick Chapel to Mr. Lewis of Union Chapel, Islington, who felt it right (I believe in christian kindness) to send for one of my deacons, in order to inform him of my having preached on the Lord's-day before in an uncanonical manner, &c. &c. ; and that, as to the nature and form of exposition, it was "wild and incoherent," and something else, which I do not remember, "*yet not altogether unscriptural.*" This naturally alarmed my deacons (who, like all other deacons amongst the Dissenters, imagined their office to be episcopal, and to have to do with the order of ministry), and I received a letter from them at Bristol, and a duplicate of it at Stafford, informing me of the reports that had reached them, and requesting me to remain another Lord's day from home, and allow them to provide a supply for my pulpit. But as I had made my arrangements, I merely informed them of my intention to preach as usual in my own pulpit on the coming Lord's day. I reached Islington late on Friday night, with the intention of preaching on the Lord's day ; but at the extreme solicitation of the deacons, I gave them liberty to provide a supply for the Lord's day, and requested, as the condition of my doing

\* The mere circumstance of a pulpit is a matter of perfect indifference to me, and my only objection to it is, that it is not a matter of indifference in the arrangement of service amongst us ; which the prominence given to it at Bristol, and here, sufficiently proves.

so, that a meeting of the seat-holders and members should be called, to receive a personal communication from me. Matters having been thus arranged, I became a hearer instead of the preacher; but little imagining, however, until the Monday, when I was kindly visited by the surgeon who attends my family, that insanity was the alleged cause of my absence from the pulpit, and that a friend who was a hearer with me was, to the great grief of my flock, stated to be *my keeper*. This affliction, however, the Lord has not been pleased to lay upon me; and as to the rest, you know on the Monday I addressed the members and seat-holders in the following circular:

“ Dear Friend,

“ A general meeting of the Church members, &c., at Islington Chapel was, according to my request, called yesterday, by notice, after the morning and evening service, for Tuesday evening, June 26, 1838, at Seven o'clock.

“ My object in now addressing you is affectionately and earnestly to press your attendance.

“ Believing, as I assuredly do, that God by his Holy Spirit has committed to me a pastorship amongst you; for the faithful continuance and discharge of this, as far as in me lies, I am responsible to God. During my recent absence, however, I have seen that the same truth which I have been preaching amongst you during the last three years requires me (in order to have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man) to make some change in the outward arrangements of service, &c. This proposed change, and the obligation



of it from Scripture, I hope to explain to yourself and other friends (D. V.) to-morrow evening.

“ I am, with increasing affection toward you, yours to serve in the Lord Jesus,

“ W. H. DORMAN.”

“ 16, Tibberton-square,  
*June 25, 1838.*”

On the Tuesday evening I cursorily went over the grounds of my conduct, and resigned back into the hands of the members and seat-holders the power they had given me to minister in that chapel, but retaining the pastorship of the souls, which the Lord Jesus had in infinite mercy and condescension committed to me.

I then offered to preach, if requested to do so, for three or four Lord's days, as a supply to prevent the congregation and managers being thrown into difficult circumstances; and on the week-day evenings I proposed to go through the scriptural evidence upon all the points I have briefly stated in these pages, and to allow perfect liberty to any brother, by a pencil note, to state any objection he might feel, or request any elucidation of any point that might not be clear, and that I would stop in the lecture, and, as the Lord might enable me, endeavour to meet the difficulty from the Word of God. This offer was declined, in relation to the chapel, as well as an offer to preach in the school-room, which I was induced to make on the supposition that the consciences of the managers might be hampered about their trust in connexion with the chapel. I have but a word to say more on the circumstances of my secession, which con-

nects itself with my brethren the Independent ministers of Islington. I was induced, in all simplicity, to apply merely for the purpose of lecturing on the week evenings, to hire the subscription school-room in Church-street,—a room that is commonly let for concerts, and Bible, and temperance meetings, and astronomical lectures, &c., the control of which is vested in a committee (the Independent ministers of Islington being members *ex-officio*); and to my first application the secretary was directed to say, “A special meeting of the committee had been called; but as there were not a sufficient number of members present to form a quorum, no definite reply could be given to my application.” Another application was made for a definite reply; and the intimation I received was, that “I had better not press for it; since the ministers had, by consent, abstained from attending the committee, and the laymen would not act without them.” This, of course, was satisfactory to my own mind as to the definitiveness of reply to my application for the school-room: and I am not called upon to judge the motives of my lately associated ministerial brethren; all that I say upon the fact is, that it was *their act alone*, and their *mode* of acting; for prior to my application to the secretary, I had the consent of those *unministerial* members of the committee, who are in the habit of taking upon themselves the responsibility of letting the room. I confess Acts xix. 24—27 just glanced across my mind when I learned the decision; but perhaps it was a severe application of the passage. But I do think my brethren should have called to see me, especially if they believed such sad

effects as they had heard, through abstinence or any other cause, had come upon me ; or if they believed me to be in error.

And now, as to errors in doctrine, dear brethren, which have been plentifully attributed to me since my secession, I may say I hold all the errors I have been preaching to you for the last three years, and all the errors that are contained in God's Word, simply and prayerfully interpreted, and presenting principles to be *acted* on as well as to be believed. All that I have to say is, If any Christian brother will show me that I am in error by the Word of God (and I may have many errors) I will most gladly relinquish it for truth : and if any one has a fuller acquaintance with the Word of God than I have attained (and many have), I shall be thankful to the Lord to have my darkness removed by his light. I would go into the whole matter in detail, but it would, I am sure, only distress you, since there is scarcely a shade of error in doctrine or practice (however opposite in character) that I have not been charged with.\*

On one point only in this connexion will I now speak. It has been said I have joined the "Brethren," and have imbibed their errors. As to the Brethren themselves, I here say very little ; but as to any errors they may hold, I can only say, that if they accord with those which I have imbibed, they must have got them

\* For my defence against the charge of Irvingism and Quakerism, as well as for an exposition of my views on the errors of the Establishment, I may refer to the second edition of "Reasons for retiring from the Established Church, by Charles Hargrove,"—a little work just published at the Central Tract Depôt, in the statements of which I entirely coincide.

from the Word of God, for that is where I found mine ; and preached them at Islington Chapel, according to the light God gave me, before I had seen or even heard of the Brethren.

I indeed know some brethren, who meet at Plymouth, simply as Christians (although I never was there) for mutual communion and edification as brethren in Christ ; and I also know some who are meeting on the same principle at Hereford ; and also at Stafford, in connexion with Alexander Stewart, an eloquent and eminent Presbyterian minister, whose conscience, exercised in God's Word, led him not long since to precede me in his secession from the Presbyterian body. I also know some Christians who have met on each Lord's day to break bread together, and to edify one another, at Little Portland-street, London ; and I have heard of many gatherings of Christians in different parts of Ireland and England, in Switzerland and in Holland. So far as I know their principles,\* I do most entirely accord with them ; and as long as I see them acting upon them,

\* If any of my readers wish to know more of their principles, they may do so by obtaining a few tracts at 1*d.* or 2*d.* each ; such as " God's System of a Church ;" " Communion and Visible Unity the Duty and Privilege of all true Christians ;" " Open Communion and Liberty of Ministry the only true grounds of Union ;" " Daniel Williams's Reasons for Leaving the Communion of the Baptists, as a Sect ;" and " B. Newton's Remonstrance to the Friends ;" and a very admirable tract, I believe by the same author, " The Apostacy of the Present Dispensation." And for a fuller exposition, " The Christian Witness," a periodical work, published quarterly, may be consulted. The whole may be obtained, as well as catalogues of the entire publications of the " Brethren," at the Tract Depôt, 1, Warwick-Square, Paternoster-row.

and making, as they do, the Word of God their only standard of appeal; and their only bond of union, love to Jesus Christ; I shall esteem it my joy and honour to be acknowledged by them, however feeble, as "a fellow-helper to the truth."

To the young persons in the congregation at Islington I would say a word. Dear young friends, you are dear to my heart in the Lord Jesus. I have ever cared for your welfare; and I now desire more fully to instruct you in the things of God. I know the fears of many of you have been awakened, and some of you have suffered already in consequence of your attachment to your pastor: for your pastor still he is in the Lord, whatever men may say to the contrary. Let me intreat you, as being myself a servant, to be entirely obedient to the will of your parents *in the Lord*; for this is well pleasing in the sight of God. But let me at the same time remind you, that you are to seek truth from the Word of God for *yourselves*. God has commanded you to obey your parents in all things; but he has never said your parents are to think for you, or to judge for you in matters of truth. There your responsibility is to Jesus Christ; and he hath said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me."

There are those who would frighten some of you (who are not restrained from Christian liberty in other respects) from ever hearing your pastor, that you may judge his instructions from the Word of God, by putting before your minds a vague notion of error, and something terrible *yet to come out*.

In closing, I may say to you, and to all Christians who may be the least concerned for scriptural simplicity in the Church of God, that the occasion for my secession was not the discovery of any new truth or principles in the Word of God, but merely a conviction that these principles which I have long held must be *acted on*. And as it is not in consequence of a discovery of new truth that I have retired, neither is it the result of any newly-felt painful pressure of the system.

For three years every thing has been going on smoothly with us. An empty chapel has been steadily filling; a bankrupt *cause* (as it is termed) has been restored to solvency; the debt on the chapel was being reduced by a thousand pounds in the course of the year; my own income, from the seat-rents, according to the rate of the last quarter, amounted to two hundred and forty pounds a year; every thing was going on well and prosperously (as the phrase is), and would have gone on, I doubt not, if conscience could have been silenced, and the Holy Ghost shut out.

It is not at all needful, except for the sake of truth, and merely to meet a standard by which men are often measured, even by Christians, that I should say, As pecuniary considerations or disappointment in my enterprise did not in the least induce me to retire from Islington Chapel, and from the Independents, so neither did they bring me to London; for I had offers of settlement far more lucrative, and in the eyes of the world far more honourable, than Islington, elsewhere at the very time I came to Islington; as any one may understand by inquiring of the Christians at Brunswick Chapel, Bristol, or Horton-lane Chapel, Bradford, Yorkshire, or even

recently in connexion with the new Independent Chapel, Reading.

Dear friends, "I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance amongst them that are sanctified;" and whether you follow me, or continue at Islington Chapel or elsewhere, I entreat that I may still be considered as a fellow-helper of your joy, and that I may be permitted to live in your affections as a brother in Christ, and as one who loves and longs after you in the bowels of Jesus Christ. It is needless for me to disparage those who now preach to you, since, however good and holy they may be, you can hardly look upon them in any other light than that of hirelings, who cannot care for the flock. If the Lord should permit you to choose a holy man, who would care for your souls, I for one should rejoice in your mercy, however much I might deplore the evils of the system in which you would be left. And as to the occasion of sorrow which I believe some of you have sincerely felt at the idea of my having left a station of great usefulness in the Church, I can only say, I feel that sphere at the present moment to be beyond any definite limit enlarged. This may appear paradoxical to some of you; but it is entirely true. For while I was the Independent Pastor of Islington Chapel, my efforts and sympathies were entirely absorbed by the interests of that place; and an actual barrier was raised, in my very position, to any intercourse with Christians of other denominations, and almost with Christians connected with other churches of the same denomination.

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I now feel that I have a message and a ministry to every child of God on earth whom I may meet on the pilgrimage of life; and am called to care for all Christians as the flock of God, instead of being shut up as within the four walls of a mausoleum, to preach in a state of entombment to men invested in the ceremonies of a system, instead of walking abroad in the light, and life, and liberty of pilgrims on earth whose citizenship is in heaven.

If what I have written in these pages should be deemed unsatisfactory to any Christian, especially to any of the brethren at Islington Chapel, or if any point should require further elucidation, I shall be glad to meet the minds of any of the children of God, by private conference at my own house or elsewhere, as the advancement of the truth, as it is in Jesus, is the only object that is *now* very dear to my heart. I now cast myself on the grace of Jesus, and on the sympathy and prayers of his disciples, for a blessing to attend this statement of scriptural principles which have, through the grace of God, influenced my own practical conduct, and which, it is my fervent desire, may influence the judgment and conduct of many others.

If any thing I have written may appear to be harsh or unkind, I am sure I shall be made to sorrow over it when it is discovered to me; but I am not conscious, at the present moment, that a single word has been employed with this intention.











