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WHAT ARE "THE BRETHERN"?

As much disquietude has of late arisen among the religious, in various parts of England and Ireland, from the appearance of "The Brethren," a few impartial words concerning them may not be amiss.—Ere attempting to define *what* they are,—it may be well to state, that the writer of these few lines does not use the name of "The Brethren" in any unkind spirit. He is aware that the individuals referred to, disclaim and protest against any name being applied to them, save that of "Christians," and "Disciples of Christ":—and he, for one, is unwilling to grieve either them or others, by the application of invidious names:—"The Brethren," however, is the name by which they are universally known to such as either warn against, or stand in doubt of them. The only other name, indeed, common to all of them, is that by which they are said to be entered in the late parliamentary return "Catholics—not Roman."

To an impartial bystander, it may seem difficult to account for *the measure* of disquietude which has,

in some places, been produced by their appearance:—unless, indeed, the novelty of their attempted position be considered a sufficient reason. Secrets they seem to have none:—for (1), they have, in many places, numerous meetings open to the public; and (2), even when assembling in private houses, any stranger that desires it is welcome to enter: they have, moreover, (3), various periodicals, and numerous essays by private individuals belonging to them; and (4), they seem, for the most part, to be so fully persuaded in their own minds, as to render concealment very difficult, if not altogether impossible. “The Brethren” (so called) are to be found now in sixty or seventy places; but have, for the most part, grown up in each site irrespective of other places.

It is this circumstance, and their confessed want of outward formal organization, which have tended most to make their immediate recognition of one another and the uniformity of their doctrine remarkable, and thus to force them into notice.

Where they first appeared, it is not now easy to discover, or the name of any one who first attempted to take their position:—the writer remembers to have met some such in 1824, at Geneva, and believes they appeared about the same time in Ireland.

Standards of doctrine, as creeds and confessions, they repudiate:—on the plea that (tho’ freely used by the church at large, and doubtless with good

intention), they have failed of retaining unity and sound doctrine, and of preventing heresy and schism.—But *One Standard* of doctrine will they own “The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible:”—For this, they plead, is the only standard raised by God,—the only faithful exhibition of all truth as it is in Jesus,—and the only standard authoritatively accredited by the Holy Ghost. Whilst, however, they insist upon the Written Word, as the only standard by which to judge of things, or *whence to learn truth*,—they rest very much upon the presence and power of the Holy Ghost, as the Guardian into whose hands the church was given, when Jesus went to the Father—and who has since taken up his abode in it, and made the church “an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

As one who has met with them, it may be in twenty or more places, and attentively watched their proceedings, I would state the following to be the doctrines common to them. That the Lord Jesus Christ is coming back again *very shortly*;—and that therefore all His disciples should make themselves ready to meet Him:—that the readiness of each disciple consists in being separated, in affection, thought, and practice, from the world and all worldliness, as one who died in Christ when He died upon the cross, and who rose in Christ when He arose, and *who ascended into Heaven in Christ*

when He ascended. This last statement (the resurrection-life of the saints, as they say) is much pressed by them:—that separation from the world and the course of the world, is to be sought for by the saints simply as a result of union with the Risen and Ascended Lord.—And this indeed is what seems to be their peculiarity, and the clue to the position they have taken, or rather are aiming to take.—“If Jesus is in Heaven (say they) and we there in Him, too,—blessed with all spiritual blessings in Heavenly places in Him, in fellowship with the Father and with the Son,—then, as led by the Spirit, we should have no more to do with the earth than had the Lord and His apostles, and the primitive church:—let us be pilgrims and strangers, seeking another country, that is a heavenly, and let us lay aside every thing that the unconverted glory in;—let us lay aside, as dung and dross, riches, honour, respectability, and every thing that ministers to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,—and let us spend every energy of body, soul, and spirit, in testifying for our Risen Head against a professing generation, who have departed from His faith and walk not in His ways, and to a world which still lies in the wicked one.

[Remember, Reader, I am not writing in defence of their peculiarities, but endeavouring to give you a faithful report of them, that you may judge them by the Word and by the Testimony].

Their testimony to the blood and righteousness of Christ—to the divine glory of His nature and person, as well as of the Holy Ghost, is clear and bold, so that their peculiarity is not to be looked for in any such things, but, as I judge, *in the position* they attempt to take, and the grounds they advance in defence of their attempt,—viz. the spiritual nature and heavenly calling of the Church.—And this is shown as much in their statement of the fundamental doctrines referred to, as in any thing else :—for tho' they preach these as fully as others, they seem unable to state them (or indeed any thing else) apart from the glory of Jesus, as their representative after the ascension.—Somehow or another Jesus, as the Lamb that was slain but is alive again for evermore, is made the centre of every thing they teach.—Speak they of His blood as atonement? 'tis on the mercy-seat they alone will see it as such :—make they mention of cleansing the conscience by the blood? methinks I can almost hear them from every place, shouting, “Sinner, if you look at the blood on the mercy-seat, your conscience must be cleansed.” Would they teach the duty of separation from the world, of Christian union, &c. 'tis still the same thing. Every one that knows that blood there, must (say they) count the saints' friendship with the world a most deadly and a most destructive evil :—They who, by the Spirit, know Jesus, as the Lamb that was slain alive again for

evermore, must, in each place, be united together in heart and mind, and outward and visible union, drawn apart from the world, &c. &c.

As to their practical conduct, no doubt can be raised, to say the least, as to their honesty; for there are few among them who have not renounced much for the sake of the truth they hold:—and their assurance, confidence, and joy of Hope, mark also, to say the least, integrity of mind and purpose. As they boast not of having yet attained the same moral strength as that which marked the primitive church, no candid mind can upbraid them with the deficiency.

But whether they are right or wrong in that which they propose to themselves, and would press upon us, as the object of pursuit, is another question—one on which we are bound without partiality to judge: and with the recapitulation—for my reader's judgment upon them—of these peculiarities, I shall conclude.

Ought the written word to be taken as the *only* standard of doctrine—the only place to learn truth?

Ought we to lean *only* and exclusively upon the Holy Ghost for power of understanding in our study of it and of faith in acting it out fully?

Ought the saints in every place to be *together*—simply as saints—separate from the worldly?

Ought they, in the full assurance of faith, to be *as*

Heavenly minded as were the Apostles, and as
much exhibiting what it is to wait for their Lord
from Heaven?

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TO THE SAINTS OF GOD WHO MEET FOR
WORSHIP SIMPLY AS SAINTS AND *IN*
THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS.

Dear Friends,

Though absent in body I am present with you in Spirit. I address you as a Servant and a Brother. May I find grace in your sight, and may you accept, for Jesus' sake, this letter, as a token of my love and care.

When I consider your meetings, dear Brethren, they seem to me like green spots in the midst of a wilderness. The thought of them oft refreshes me.—Not because they agree with my views; not because they are connected with myself, but because they are in a peculiar way pleasing to God the Father, as instances of *obedience*, through the Spirit, to the truth as it is in Jesus.

Brethren, how high and holy is that which you profess! that you are sanctified in Christ Jesus—and that you have found in the Cross of Jesus (not only the salvation of your souls as individuals, but also) the centre and power of union for the Church, both in Heaven and on Earth. And is not the Lamb that was slain a most worthy rallying point for the Saints? How rich a display does it afford of Power and Wisdom, and of Glory! 'Tis this, as made known by the Spirit of God, which alone delivers from the selfish party spirit of the world. It is this which leads into present intimacy with the eternal inheritance of glory prepared for those that love God,—the pledge that all things ARE ours, the encouragement to suffer with Jesus now, that hereafter we may reign with Him. 'Tis this which enables the Saints to discern that which is carnal and *with one* consent (1 Cor. v.) as a body to put it away from them;—which crucifies to the things of the world and the flesh, and leads to a walk

honest and upright before the Lord ; guiding each, according to his own measure of faith, in such things as are inferred from Scripture rather than plainly taught by it, to walk with faithfulness, but with humility ; and in such as are to the minds of others questionable, with self-denying forbearance : For it teaches that our privileges are glorious, not so much because they minister to self, as because they give ability to meet responsibility and to serve God in the World and in the Church. And O how richly does this furnish power to live to the Church as, without division, one, even as in each place it bids *all* (1 Cor. xi. 18, 20, 23) *with one consent* to meet and show forth, in the Supper of the Lord, the symbol of their unity and love, waiting in it one for another, and *with one consent* also (1 Cor. xiv. 23) in each place to meet and edify one another, through the powers and love communicated by the Spirit dwelling among them : and lastly, 'tis this which purges out heresy, and establishes in all truth and practical love of the brethren.

Brethren, you meet simply "*as Christians*"—rallying around the Cross.

Great is the grace and truth which God has shown you, and great is the return which His love demands from you ! Far otherwise is it with all around ! Where are any to be found who unite simply "*as Christians*" in the power of the life of the Spirit, and by means of the death, resurrection, and session in Heaven for them of Christ?—Observe the Roman Catholics :—They are gathered and kept together by their agreement, (i.) that the Pope is Christ's Vicar [that is, that the Pope and *not* the Holy Ghost was sent *in the stead of* Jesus (John xiv.)] ; and (ii.) that the root and fulness of God's church (which we know to be Jesus in Heaven (Eph. i. and ii.) is the body of priests, &c. whose head quarters are at Rome. AGAIN, the National Establishment* :—that is kept together by agreement to recognize the monarch (whether King or Queen) as Head instead of the Pope

* At Rome the Church is mistress of Worldliness—in England Worldliness is mistress of the Church.

[that is instead of the Holy Ghost, for the Pope has usurped His place]. See, too, the Baptists.—What unites them? Agreement about “one fragment of truth:” that a confession of Faith is to be required from those who would be baptized. Just so is the bond of union among Independents, whose bit of truth is that each church should be independent of others: that is, that, as to its government and discipline, it should not be subject to any individual or to any conference, but to its own members. On the other hand, the Wesleyans meet in the name of Mr. Wesley, and set up his books as the standard of truth instead of the Bible. The Irvingites meet because they have gotten a new Spirit such as the children of God have not:—one who says it is above the Bible, and can absolve men from responsibility to it,—one who teaches that Christ had the law of sin and death in His body, and that man is to be justified, not by the blood of the Lamb but by a holiness wrought in him; All that can say that this Spirit is from God meet together. Weary labour would it be, dear Brethren, to go through all the sects—of the Moravians, the Swedenborgians, the Bible Christians, the Pantonians, the Quakers, &c. &c. &c. but enough, for none of them even profess to seek that their union on earth should be *but the manifestation and shew of that real union which Saints have IN Christ in heaven*. None of them pretend to afford a *place on earth where all who appear to be partakers of the Spirit—and to believe in Jesus may unite together, as the Father and the Son are one*. With one and all, the union is a matter of agreement only. And there is not with any of them a pretence of its being “the natural and necessary result of the Spirit’s making known the Lamb that was slain, but is alive again for evermore.” Alas! how various are the forms which self-will, unsubjected to Scripture, assumes! how innumerable the ways in which it works.

But you, beloved, meet simply as disciples;—“one is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.” You come together not to hear a favorite preacher, nor by means of any worldly interests, nor from a disproportionate

love of one bit of truth, nor in the name of any man. You recognize among disciples on earth, no bond but the bond of the Spirit, and no means of union, but Jesus sitting in heaven for the Church, as the Lamb that was slain, alive again for evermore. Thus your church union on earth only *manifests* and *makes apparent* what is the real bond, and what the real means of Christians being united together, even that which binds each believer to Jesus. Thus it does not, as does the union of the sects, introduce and substitute some new, fictitious, earth-found bond and means in place of the true; whereby the attention is distracted between that which saves the individual and that which unites the body. For in Jesus you have learnt that what saves separate individuals, is one and the same with what unites the saved individuals into one body, viz:—the life of the Spirit, and the grace and glory seen in Jesus. Bear with me, Brethren, while I enlarge a little upon this—and show, **FIRST**—that, according to God's mind, it is **PARTICIPATION OF THE SPIRIT**, which constitutes (i.) the union of individuals with Jesus; (ii.) the union of the Church in Heaven; and (iii.) the union of the Church on earth. And **SECONDLY**, that **THE PERSON OF JESUS** is God's centre; (i.) for our hopes as individuals, (ii.) for the Church in Heaven, and (iii.) for the Church on earth. I the more desire to recall this to you, because others have rather shewn in what Church union does not than in what it should consist. i. then, I am to shew that that which unites us as individuals to Jesus—which unites together the individuals who compose the Church in Heaven, and which unites the individuals who compose the Church upon earth, are not three different things but one and the same thing, viz.—the Spirit: in other words, that the Spirit is the bond (i.) of each believing soul to Jesus; and (ii.) of the souls which are in Heaven; and (iii.) of the believing souls which are on earth together.

I. The following Scriptures prove that the Spirit is the bond of each believing soul to Jesus. "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit" (1 Cor. vi. 17). "If any

man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His" (Rom. viii. 9). "For we were by nature children of wrath even as others," (Eph. ii. 3); and we know that, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit" (John iii. 5) he cannot see the kingdom of God. See also 1 Cor. ii. 7—16; xii. 3: John vi. 63.

II. These passages, in shewing us what constitutes union with Jesus, show us also what is the union of the Church in Heaven. For, if the Church in Heaven is made up of individuals who had vital union with Jesus, and if this vital union consists only and simply in possessing the Spirit (so that every one that has the spirit has the union, and he that has not the spirit has not the union), then the Church in Heaven is made up of those who have the Spirit.

This is also proved beyond question, in that the Church in Heaven was saved by the blood and grace and glory of the Lamb, which can be known alone by the Spirit.

Neither of these points did I ever hear questioned; though there exists an almost universal ignorance and practical denial of what is, in Scripture, every whit as clear and plain, as either of these, viz.

III. That God intended, proposed and commanded the union of the Church upon earth to rest upon this same thing, participation of the Spirit.

When Paul was writing to the Ephesians, the Holy Ghost distinctly affirmed that Himself constituted the union of the Church upon earth;—"The unity of the Spirit" (Eph. iv. 3). And what does this mean but just this, that the bond of union was the Spirit—that He that had the Spirit *therefore* belonged to the Church, and that he that had not the Spirit *therefore* did not belong to the Church. For what was the Church as established on the day of Pentecost, but just "an habitation of God *through the Spirit*" (Eph. ii. 22; 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17; 2 Cor. vi. 16; 1 Pet. ii. 5). And, as if, to put this question for ever at rest, and at the same time to shame the Gentiles down to the dust for their present conduct, it was **THIS VERY PRINCIPLE** which gave them entrance at all into the Church. It was this truth, I say, alone

which constrained the Apostle of the circumcision to overcome his own pre-conceived notions, to act in defiance of the judgment of the whole Church at Jerusalem. and go unto Gentiles ;—see Acts ix. and x. And afterwards, when called to account by the Church at Jerusalem who (chap. xi.) contended with him, saying, “Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised and didst eat with them,” the sum and substance of His deliberate defence was this, **THEY HAD RECEIVED THE SPIRIT:—**(v. 17.) “Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; *what was I that I could withstand God?*”—and (v. 18.) “When they heard these things they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.” May God, of his infinite mercy grant, to His people everywhere now a like mind, that they may recognize that the union of the Church on earth is the presence of the Spirit; so that, to reject, on any plea whatsoever, from our fellowship upon earth, those who have the Spirit is “**TO FIGHT AGAINST GOD.**”

That the presence of the Spirit also was the plea for receiving all those who had been received, whether Jews or Gentiles, the x. xi. and the xii. of the 1 Cor. largely shew, as also other Scriptures.* And let not any say that these were gifts of the Spirit, for surely “the life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment,” so that, if gifts, (which pass away (1 Cor. xiii.) and may be used to evil and by evil men) would suffice to shew who should unite together, how much more the life of the Spirit as witnessed in those who cry, Abba Father.

I now enter upon the second point, viz:—that God's centre for our hope as individuals—for the Church in

* Observe. The question is not, “Whether we are able to settle who *really* has the Spirit or who has not?” Let it be conceded that we are sure often to err, still the truth remains the same—our plea for union with any is, that we have been made to drink into one Spirit, and by one Spirit have been all baptized into one body (1 Cor. xii. 13); but of this more hereafter.

Heaven—and for the Church upon earth—are not three distinct things, but one and the same thing, the person of Jesus as the Lamb that was slain, alive again for evermore. And first, I would notice that this is immediately connected with the former; much more so than many see. For the grand office and work of the Spirit in the Church is to take of the things of Jesus and to shew them unto us (John xvi. 13—15); see also 1 Cor. ii. 7—16.

I am to shew then that the person of Jesus is (i.) the salvation of every believer, (ii.) the centre of the Church in Heaven, and (iii.) the centre of the Church on earth.

I. That Jesus is the centre of all our trust and hopes *as individuals* I need not stop to prove; suffice that one word, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark xvi. 16), "for we know that there is none other name under Heaven given among men whereby they can be saved" (Acts v. 12); and O most blessed truth! "God hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. iv. 7).

II. This, as well as the praises of the redeemed in the Revelations, shows us what is the centre of the Church in Heaven, even Jesus, the mediator of the New Covenant, and "the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Heb. xii. 24). And are either of these one whit plainer than (which is so overlooked, and in practice so denied now) "that Jesus is God's centre for the Church on earth"?

See Acts ii. 41. "Then *they that gladly received his word* were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." (v. 44) "And *all that believed* were together, and had all things common;" (iv. 32) "And the multitude of *them that believed* were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common." (ix. 27, 28) "But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the Apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him; and how he had preached

boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem." The whole of the Acts and the Epistles prove just this, that church union was of disciples *as such*,—of Children of God *as such*; sufficient proof has been advanced, that what saves separate individuals is one and the same thing with what unites the individuals, when saved together, into one body, viz.:—the life of the Spirit opening in us the grace and glory of the Lamb that was slain, alive again for evermore.

If we consider the mode in which the Spirit acts, we shall see that church union should be the simple and immediate result of the life and privilege possessed in common by the Saints. Can the life of Christ be reigning in one, and that one not be seeking to do His will in all things, yielding himself up from his own will and the ways of the world? And can the life of Christ be in several, in different places, and they not all be seeking to do His will in all things—the whole company (without reference to one another, for they may not know of one another's being) be yielding themselves up each from His own will and the ways of the world unto the guidance of the Spirit; and thus correspondence will be formed in them, for they have union in one common life and principle of government. Again, can the grace and glory of Jesus be opened to one, and that one not be led to count all things but dung and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Him—being instructed and guided by what is in Him: so I say, can the grace and glory of Jesus be open to several or to many, and the whole company not do likewise (without reference to one another) simply by the knowledge of Jesus)? "we all, with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 18). The tree may have many branches, but it has but one life, but one root.

And it is the same truth which draws us from the world to God which also knits our hearts one to another? Let us imagine an European, an American, an Asiatic,

and an African meeting unexpectedly in some wild of Africa, each of whom is a partaker of the Spirit of God and is subject to the truth as it is in Jesus. Let those who know what the communion of Saints is, say, concerning such a group, what will be their love one toward another and what their desire of pleasing one another, and whence does this flow? simply from their common life and their common ground of trust and hope, "Jesus as the Lamb that was slain, alive again for evermore." Their union is not one resulting from circumstances, but is one of inward life and power and privilege.*

Now as to all the modern (so called) churches, the opposite of this is the case; and this it is which most grieves me as to them. In the group I have imagined, the communion they realize upon discovering one another is *merely* the development of the life they possess in Christ. The elements of it they had before they knew how it would be developed under such circumstances. If a man is led by the Spirit and has faith in what is written concerning Jesus, he possesses the *elements* of the communion of saints, though he may never have thought about it, and never have met a believer. All that he needs in order to realize it, is to know another saint:—for it is but a new application of the life and privilege which he has in Christ Jesus. Your church fellowship is upon these simple principles: that which leads me into it therefore is the life and the glory which I have in Jesus. I find no effort in coming among you. The Spirit and Faith I have, as much incline me to meet with all believers as such, as they disincline me from

* As the Spirit is the bond, and Jesus the means, of unity, so increases of strength can come to the individual believer or to the Church, as a whole, only by fresh apprehensions through the Spirit of what is in Jesus. I state this with confidence—for I am sure that as there is not a single work past, present, or future, of the Son, connected with any of His offices or character, the knowledge of which does not tend to lift up each soul that believes it from the world, drawing the affection to God and Man, in obedience and joy—so is it as to an assembly of believers.—I state this in principle, leaving it to each individual believer daily to act upon as to himself and others.

associating myself with a body of people with whom I can have no consistent or conscientious membership, till I have settled some hard question about continued succession—baptism—church government, &c.; yea, more, have held a regular assize upon the pretensions of all the various churches. What an expanse of worldliness does such a thought present! With such radical error and defect in the very principle of their associations, how can those who belong to these sects expect to be able to meet the face of their Lord with joy? To me it seems plain enough that if God has appointed one true bond and one means of union,—to disparage these, set them aside and choose others, is sin and very great sin. But acknowledging that which God has appointed, you have union as the natural and necessary result of the Spirit's making known the Lamb that was slain but is alive again for evermore. And not only so; you have union as an act of OBEEDIENCE. I would have you to remember this, that our meeting together is as plainly enjoined as that Israel's males should go three times a year to Jerusalem; and the objects of our meeting are so defined as to amount to a description of the mode in which we should meet: for *it is written*—"This is my body, which is broken for you: *this do in remembrance of me*"—"this cup is the New Testament in my blood: *this do ye as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me*. For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup* ye do shew the Lord's death till He come" (1 Cor. xi. 26). And again,

* How oft will love respond to this demand? Observe,—as it was the death of Jesus which cleared the whole church (whose names are written in Heaven) from the evils of Sin; and as it was the resurrection life of Jesus which brought them all into the privilege and glory which is theirs, so the symbol upon earth of their union is the Supper of the Lord *until He come*; for as the bread and wine are *common* to them, so, have they His death and life as their common portion. In shewing forth *His death till He come*, the Lamb that was slain, alive again for evermore, is exhibited, as, through the Spirit, their common portion. His death clearing them from Sin and Death and Satan, His life lifting them up into glory. Not only are we to be ready *as individuals* to unite with all who have the spirit and faith— but also corporately.

“not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another: and so much the more as ye see the day approaching” (Heb. x. 25); and “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. xviii. 20).

Obedience then brings you together as disciples led by the Spirit: for the Scriptures order all who have the Spirit and who believe in Jesus to meet together. And so acting, self is brought into subjection to what is written.

The duty of Christians to meet together at all in worship is much misunderstood. When Satan cannot keep us ignorant of it, he does all he can to send us to wrong meetings or to give us wrong motives. What is our duty? That they *whose sins are forgiven them* [for who else can partake of the Supper worthily or discern the Lord's body, other than as their condemnation (xi.) or have fellowship with the apostles (x. 16, 17)] should meet together to break bread. And again, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves, &c. &c.” that is, those who know one another as Saints (ourselves) are to meet together: and for what (not to hear the gospel preached to the unconverted, but) to *exhort one another*? The duty of meeting together, then, is just this,—“Those who have the Spirit are to meet together in the name of Jesus, for the Supper and mutual exhortation.” Many think they are doing what is here commanded, when the meetings they attend are not “of saints” but equally open to the worldly-minded: membership with which depends upon worldly distinctions, as for instance the Establishment. But is a meeting where none, howsoever worldly or profane, are excluded, the assembling of *ourselves* (the Saints)? Surely not. Others again go where men meet as Baptists, or as Independents, or as Wesleyans, and not simply as disciples led by the Spirit. This is nearly as wrong: for in such cases the door is shut not only against the world, but against those believers who do not see eye to eye with them; and the meeting is not for mutual exhortation. And so Jesus'

body is rent and His Spirit is grieved. But where a meeting upon right principles is open, as to yourselves, brethren (where all who have the Spirit, and faith are welcome), Satan then tries to give wrong motives ;—such as our liking such an one's preaching, or expositions or such an one's pastoral visits and love. Surely precious as these things are, they are not the right motives for uniting together. Obedience is our proper motive, and obedience only :—that we must obey God rather than man, and God has said “ as often as ye eat &c.” and “ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,” &c.—“ but exhorting one another ” &c.—“ Where two or three are gathered together in *my* name,” &c.

This, dear Brethren, is just my sole reason for meeting with you :—finer preaching might I get elsewhere—and pay too, perhaps, for ministry and more respectability. But God has said, “ as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come,” and “ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is ; but exhorting one another : and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” “ Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst.”

Now in the place of your abode, I know of no other meeting where disciples assemble simply “ in the name of Jesus ”—“ to break bread ”—“ and exhort one another : ” therefore, notwithstanding every drawback of weakness and ignorance among us (and God knows there are plenty) I must obey God ; and so I come to you. And now that I am absent for a season, I am anxious that Satan should get no advantage over us by jealousies, heresies or divisions. Remember, we are not come together to please ourselves, but to *obey God*, and show forth the communion of Saints in the death and resurrection of Jesus, through the Spirit. Every one of us must learn in honour to prefer one another ; to submit one to another ; to do nothing but unto the edification of the brethren ; to bear in mind, and to act upon the thought, that we are every one members one of another. Have

any of us gifts? Are we able to exhort or interpret? Let us see that we do it, not with a view of pleasing ourselves, but let every man seek to please his neighbour for his good to edification; and if we cannot do this, let us not use our gifts at all, but be swift to hear and slow to speak. Thus have I walked among you; God is my witness, I have not spoken to please myself, but only so far as the Lord gave me power to please my brethren for their good to edification, and so far as I believed myself responsible to God and to you. And how much rather would I have sat by and heard others read the Bible. Remember! we do not want numbers for communion, "Where two or three, &c." Remember also we do not want gifts of preaching, a few chapters and a few hymns and a few words of exhortation suffice—the more simple the better.

Some among you are, I fear, in danger of speaking to please themselves: and some who would not so speak but with the view of pleasing God, are in danger of forgetting that in order in speaking to please God, we must please our neighbour. There are among you some also of captious mind, ready to find fault and not so ready to be pleased as they should. Little children, love one another, for love is of God,—learn every one to abase himself, and to consider his own will, of all people's, the last which should be indulged, the first which should be given up. Satan and the flesh will strive against this; Why so much to be expected from *us*? Why *we* always have to give up? Let us count this rather joy and glory,—our resemblance to Jesus, who never pleased himself.—The trial is from God that we may glorify Jesus.

Dear Brethren, why have I met with you? for my own comfort or my own refreshment? God forbid, The first and the only motive prevailing in my mind, so far as any was needful, has been *obedience*, knowing that it is the obedience of Disciples which glorifies Jesus. True, I have had abundance of comfort, edification, and refreshment; and when will they not be found in the *path of*

obedience—but if sought for for their own sakes, it would not be obedience but self-pleasing.

And now, Brethren, as Satan has added many thorns to my portion in being with you, that so God might prove whether I came to you to please myself or to obey Him, I can well suppose many troubles may be upon you, just to try how far your motives are right before God. How far the reason of your coming together is obedience to the written word or accidental advantages. If your motives are right, you would continue to come, though the meeting should be as profitless as that at Corinth; but if your motives are not pure, any little hindrance will suffice to deter you. "Such an one is not there"—or, "I do not feel so comfortable as I used," will be enough to keep you away. Beware also, whilst anxiously contending for the faith once delivered to the Saints, concerning the union of believers being simply *as* believers, lest you be drawn away from the life and walk of Christ Jesus, *as individuals*. Beware of Satan, Beloved. He will do all in his power to make you into a sect, and to make you say "*and I am of Christ*:" opposing union in Christ's name to the other parties: beware of the spirit "He followeth not us." Love the brethren every where, and by all means seek to enlighten them in all of God's truth, but not with the view of proselyting them to be "of us," but for the saving of their souls into fuller likeness to Jesus.

I have heard some say that, in our meetings, there is conflict between the Spirit and the flesh—so it ought to be—and God giveth more grace—no trouble is it to roll down hill; but it is in the path of obedience Satan most hinders. Better surely is conflict with life, than quietness with death—and better is obedience and sorrow now, if needs be, than ease and the displeasing of God.

Brethren, I am deeply concerned in your walk, surely you will not make me ashamed but joyous. I have laboured to teach you that ye are redeemed from out of the world by the blood of Jesus, and that you are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Heavenly places in Christ