

NEEDED

TRUTH.

EDITED BY

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They read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.—NEH. viii. 8.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
ANCIENT HISTORY, SKETCHES OF	79
ASSEMBLIES, THE FELLOWSHIP OF	28, 49, 97
BECAUSE I MAY	41
COMING OF THE CHRIST, THE	23
COMING OF THE LORD FOR HIS CHURCH, THE	1
CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT:—	
THE CHURCH AT THE HOUSE	187
DIVISION	135
FELLOWSHIP OF ASSEMBLIES, THE	28, 49, 97
FELLOWSHIP OR INDEPENDENCY—WHICH?	180
FRAGMENTS	90
GRACE AND TRUTH	175
GREAT TRIBULATION, THE, WILL THE COMING OF THE LORD FOR HIS CHURCH BE BEFORE OR AFTER?	1
HOW CAN POWER BE RESTORED TO THE ASSEMBLIES?	145
HUMANITARIANISM AND THE MYSTERY	127
INDEPENDENCY, FELLOWSHIP OR	180
JOTTINGS ON THE EPISTLE TO TITUS	121, 162
“MOSES’ WRITINGS”	79
OTHER LANDS:—CANADA	91, 138, 140
CHINA	141
ITALY	91
UNITED STATES	91, 138, 140
QUESTION, A TRANSATLANTIC	145
QUESTION AND ANSWER, DEPARTMENT OF	93, 142
Matt. v. 45	95
Luke ii. 2, iii. 1	143
Acts ii.	143
Rom. viii. 14	95
,, xv. 7	144
1 Cor. v. 10	143
Gal. iii. 7	95
,, iii. 27	93
Heb. ix. 28	96
1 Pet. iii. 19, iv. 6	94
SEPARATION AND UNITY	169
SKETCHES OF ANCIENT HISTORY	79
THOUGHTS ON UNION	42
TIME TO HATE, A	77
TITUS, JOTTINGS ON	121, 162
TRANSATLANTIC QUESTION, A	145
TRIBULATION, THE GREAT, WILL THE COMING OF THE LORD FOR HIS CHURCH BE BEFORE OR AFTER?	1
WHERE AND WHEN DID PAUL WRITE THE LETTERS TO THE CHURCH OF GOD AT CORINTH?	46
WITHIN AND WITHOUT	104
WORKERS TOGETHER	86

ERRATA.

Page 11, line 4, for word read Word.

„ 20, „ 16, „ “I am, and shall deceive many,” *read* “I am,” and shall
deceive many.

„ 24, „ 15, *for* fifty-first, *read* sixty-first.

„ 41, „ 9 *from bottom, for* bond union, *read* bond of union.

„ 121, „ 8 „ „ Creteans *read* Cretans.

„ 140, „ 15 „ „ This *read* San Francisco.

NEEDED TRUTH.

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THE COMING OF THE LORD FOR HIS CHURCH— WILL IT BE BEFORE OR AFTER THE GREAT TRIBULATION?

THE JEWS—THE GENTILES—THE CHURCH OF GOD.

“THE first covenant had ordinances of divine service and a worldly sanctuary.”¹ The whole economy,—the house, the priesthood, the altar, the offerings,—was divinely appointed. Every detail was carried out “as the Lord commanded Moses,” and according to the pattern showed to him in the mount. Yet when speaking to the woman of Sychar, the Lord Jesus said to her, “The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem, worship the Father”²; and again, “The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.” An entirely new dispensation was about to be introduced, and with it the distinction between Jew and Gentile was to disappear, as far, at least, as concerned the people of God. “He is our peace,” wrote the Apostle Paul to the Ephesian saints, “who hath made both” (Jew and Gentile) “one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us: . . . for to make in Himself of

¹ Heb. ix. 1.

² John iv. 21.

twain one new man, so making peace."¹ In the past dispensation the grand distinction was between Jew and Gentile: the Jew, in covenant relationship with God; the Gentile, afar off. But now all that believed ceased to be either Jew or Gentile, and became members of that one Body, "where there is neither Greek, nor Jew, circumcision, nor uncircumcision."² For this new dispensation the Lord Jesus gave His commandments, and these commandments entirely displaced all the regulations of the Mosaic economy, and were to endure to the end of the age.³

So long, then, as that Body is incomplete; so long as believing ones are being baptized in the one Spirit into that one Body; or, in other words, so long as the present age or dispensation endures; there can be no restoration of an earthly sanctuary, owned by JEHOVAH as His house, or of earthly sacrifices, accepted by Him as a savour of a sweet smell.

The difficulties to be surmounted by those who teach that the saints of this dispensation are to pass through the great tribulation, are many and grave; but perhaps there is none graver than the contradiction of the above plain statements of Scripture which their belief involves. They cannot deny that when the Lord Jesus comes again to earth, as Son of man, to destroy the Antichrist and to set up His own kingdom, He will find a rebuilt temple, where the daily burnt-offering has once again been offered to God. Not only so; it is impossible to question that both the temple and the sacrifices offered there will have been owned by God, and that on account of a company of believing Jews, who have been brought into covenant relationship to God, and who have had a full and intelligent understanding of His purposes.

Now if the present age is to run right on to the time of the descent of the Lord Jesus upon the Mount of Olives,

¹ Eph. ii. 14, 15.

² Col. iii. 11.

³ Matt. xxviii. 18-20.

every Jew who believes, down to the last moment before that descent, will cease to be a Jew, and will be incorporated into the Body—will belong to the Church. Who are those, then, that are offering sacrifices in a rebuilt temple at Jerusalem? We get landed in utter confusion, that only becomes worse confounded as we attempt to extricate ourselves.

We have said that it is not denied that there will be a temple and an altar at Jerusalem, owned as His by God, when the Lord Jesus returns to earth. It will be well, however, to show from the Word of God that this is so; and also to prove, in like manner, that there will be at that time a believing remnant of Jews, with whom God will have entered into covenant. Let us turn first to Malachi iii. 1, where we find the whole thing. A temple, which is called the Lord's house; a waiting people, whose delight is in the Lord; and the Lord coming to them in the character of Messenger of the covenant. Again, at the close of the chapter, we have the same people, described as those that feared the Lord and thought upon His Name (ver. 16). "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in the day that I do make, even a peculiar treasure" (ver. 17, R.V.). The day that God will make is the day of His wrath, and vengeance (comp. vers. 1 and 3 of chap. iv). But while it will be a day of destruction to His enemies, He adds (ver. 2): "But unto you that fear My Name shall the Sun of righteousness arise, with healing in His wings." Be it noticed that the scene of all this is laid in Jerusalem, and that then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, while the sons of Levi shall be purified and fitted for all their former functions. This, indeed, will be after the Lord has come; but previous to His coming the despisers and those that fear the Lord will be together in Jerusalem, while the temple is called His temple. We find the same thing in Zephaniah iii.

Jerusalem is rebellious and polluted; but the Lord addresses a remnant, who are to wait for Him, till He gathers the nations and assembles the kingdoms, to pour upon them His indignation.

Turning to Daniel xi., we get considerable detail about the God-fearing remnant. In verse 21 the wicked king appears on the scene, and in the two verses following we get reference to the league that he is to make with the Jews (see chap. ix. 27), while he himself is called the prince of the covenant! But this chapter tells us of another covenant, which, together with the persons who have entered into it, is the special object of this wicked king's hatred. This covenant is called "the *holy* covenant" (see vers. 28, 30 and 32), while those who are loyal to it are called the "understanding ones" (Heb. *Maschilim*, the same word as in chap. xii. 3—"they that be wise"). Some will forsake the covenant, after having made profession of allegiance to it, and the wicked king will corrupt such with his flatteries. The understanding ones will seek to instruct the many; but the multitude will fail to profit by their instructions, and will fall by sword, flame and captivity. The daily sacrifice will have been restored, but will now be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate will be set up.

Now let all this be compared with Matthew xxiv. There the Lord is addressing a little company of men, in reply to their own questions as to the signs of His coming again. These men were Jews, but they had believed in Him, and were consequently the objects of the suspicion and enmity of their brethren. To them, in the representative character they then bore, the Lord addresses instructions for the guidance and help of those who should be placed in like circumstances immediately before His coming to earth again. The turning-point of the whole of that dark and perilous time will be when the abomination of desola-

tion, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, is set up in the holy place (see ver. 15). This identifies the two passages in Daniel xi. and Matthew xxiv. What will make those men of the holy covenant to be understanding ones, so that they will escape while others perish? Just the fact that they will have Matthew xxiv. for their guide, and the moment they see the antichrist image set up in the temple, they will flee to the mountains, as the Lord had bidden them. The Lord here calls the temple "the holy place"; and again in 2 Thessalonians ii. 4, in direct connection with the setting up of the abomination of desolation, it is called the "temple of God."

All these scriptures need to be carefully considered and compared. Many more might be added, but we think abundant proof has been given of the point we started with. That in the days immediately preceding the coming of the Lord Jesus to earth, as Son of man, there will be a temple at Jerusalem in which the daily sacrifice will be offered, and that God will own the temple and accept the sacrifice. There will be a believing remnant of Jews, who will have owned Jesus of Nazareth as their Saviour and Messiah, and to whom, when He comes, it will be as One they had waited for and delighted in. They will have entered into a holy covenant with the Lord, and they will have understanding of His purposes and of what is coming to pass, so that they will escape to a place of safety during the last awful days of the tribulation.

But these are not of the Church—the Body of Christ. Had they believed while the Church was on earth, while the present dispensation was still enduring, they would have ceased to be Jews, and could have had no part in the temple-worship or sacrifice. The two things cannot exist together on the earth. While the Body is still in process of formation, there can be no sanctuary on earth owned by God, for all who believe are one in Christ. But the Lord will descend

in the clouds, and we shall be caught up to meet Him in the air (1 Thess. iv. 17). Then, while we are away with Him, all the events we have been glancing at will have their fulfilment on the earth, and Jews and Gentiles who believe in that interval will keep their respective positions. At the close of those events the Lord will come to earth, and then He shall consume that Wicked One with the Spirit of His mouth. Then all Judah and Jerusalem shall look on Him whom they had pierced, and own Him at last; but only those of them who had believed without seeing will be able to say, "This is the Lord: we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."

(A. J. H.)

They who enjoyed the love of the Lord Jesus Christ during the days of His flesh were comforted by Him when the hour of His departure drew near with the sweet promise, "If I go, . . . I come again, and I will receive you unto Myself."¹ And we who in later times have believed on Him have become partakers of the same precious hope²—the hope of His personal coming for those who are "in Christ." For this too He looks, joyfully anticipating the moment when He shall present to Himself glorious the Church which He loved and for which He gave Himself.³

But besides this, "We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now,"⁴ and that "the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revelation of the sons of God."⁵ How as we look around to-day we can echo the cry of Asaph, "The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty."⁶ And does not the bitter wail of human woe, does not the deep murmur of brute suffering, reach the ears of our Saviour

¹ John xiv. 3.

² Eph. iv. 4.

³ Eph. v. 25, 27.

⁴ Rom. viii. 22.

⁵ Rom. viii. 19.

⁶ Ps. lxxiv. 20.

God? We trow it does. Social reformers may cry out in indignation at cruelty to children or cruelty to animals; they may expose the infamy of "sweating," or denounce the atrocities of the Turks. All their efforts can but fail, or at the most have but a very partial and insignificant success; but there sits to-day upon the throne of God the Man of Sorrows, with a feeling, human heart. He waits, He longs for the coming day of God's good time, when Himself shall save the children of the needy, when Himself shall break in pieces the oppressors. For He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper; . . . and precious shall their blood be in His sight.¹

For the correct answering of the question at the head of these articles, it is well to keep distinctly before the mind the two purposes which our Lord has before Him for accomplishment. First, He has to keep His promise, "If I go, I come," a promise given to a few disciples in private on the eve of His death, accompanied by another promise, that He would send a Comforter to abide with them in the meanwhile.² They who were together on the Day of Pentecost received this latter promise,³ even the Holy Spirit, who is also the pledge of the former promise being fulfilled. Moreover, they who were together on the Day of Pentecost and received the Spirit were in that Spirit immersed into one Body,⁴ builded together as one Church.⁵ Into this Body have been immersed, into this Church have been builded, from then till now, Jews and Gentiles, bond and free, being believers, who have likewise received the Holy Spirit of the Promise, which is a pledge of our inheritance until the redemption of the Possession be fully consummated.⁶ So that by His precious gift of the Holy Spirit, whereby we are united with all (living or sleeping)

¹ Ps. lxxii.² John xiv. 16.³ Acts ii. 1-4.⁴ 1 Cor. xii. 13.⁵ Matt. xvi. 18.⁶ Eph. i. 13, 14.

who are in Christ, the All-gracious Head has pledged to us the same blessed word : " I am coming, and will receive you unto Myself." Firstly, then, He has before Him this promise to fulfil.

Secondly, He has to fulfil the prophecies concerning Himself as the Son of David and the Son of Abraham, as the Seed of the Woman and the Son of man. He has to take His place as earth's rightful monarch; He has to assume the sceptre of Judah in the land of Palestine.

Concerning these things the Scriptures abound with instruction, but the Word of Truth must be rightly divided between them. And ere we can expect to learn whether the Great Tribulation or aught else intervenes between their accomplishment we must first clearly discriminate between them. We shall find the passages which refer to the Lord's coming for His Church generally pretty easy to distinguish from those which refer to His coming as for the earth and earthly blessing, and the contrasting of a few of these respectively will serve to pave the way for the consideration of the question we have to answer.

An attentive perusal of the first letter of Paul to the church of Thessalonians in the light of Acts xvii. will clearly demonstrate concerning the Thessalonian believers : (1) That they looked for the return of the Lord as that which might take place at any moment.¹ (2) That they were not looking for any sign to first come and forewarn of His coming.¹ (3) That Paul does not in the faintest way hint or suggest that they were in error hereabout. (4) That they feared that those who had been put to sleep by Jesus would miss the blessedness of welcoming the Lord when He came. (5) That this, being a mistake, was corrected by Paul.² Therefore (6), That they were right in expecting the Lord at any moment from heaven, and in not looking for a sign to precede His coming.

¹ 1 Thess. i. 10.

² 1 Thess. iv. 13-18.

On the other hand, in the accounts of the coming of the Christ contained in the Gospel of the Son of David (according to Matthew), chapter xxiv., and the Gospel of the Son of man (according to Luke), chapter xxi., there are definite and repeated allusions to signs which must precede that coming, signs of a most distinct and unmistakable character, tribulation of unparalleled severity, darkening of the sun and moon, etc., etc.

Again, when we read the detailed information as to the coming of the Lord for which we look, we learn that we shall meet the Lord **IN THE AIR**.¹ Whereas we are told distinctly in regard to His coming to fulfil the Israelitish prophecies that His feet shall stand in that day **UPON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES**, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof.² Thus of necessity it follows that we are first caught up to meet Him, as 1 Thessalonians iv. 16, 17, has it, and that afterwards He comes to the earth. What may intervene between these two events we have so far but hinted at; but this we hold to have already proved, and proved beyond all doubt, that the coming of the Lord is twofold. First, He comes to mid-air and meets His Church. Later, He comes to the earth with His Church to fulfil the prophecies concerning Him. Moreover, we have shown that the coming to mid-air for the Church is set before us in Scripture as a present hope. Whereas the coming of the Son of man to the earth is to be preceded by clear and unmistakable signs.

(C. M. L.)

In the revelation of the mystery—kept in silence through times eternal, but now manifested for the obedience of faith—it will be found that although parts of the revealing Scriptures appear involved and difficult in respect of

¹ 1 Thess iv. 17.

² Zech. xiv. 3, 4.

“things to come,” yet that certain lines of truth, lines well defined and clearly marked, run through the whole; and it will further be found that in prophetic study the measure of understanding of the truth and of discernment of the mind of God will depend upon the measure of discernment of these leading lines, and that upon them the details of the whole mighty and amazing scheme have been elaborated.

A wayfaring man who tarries in a strange city, and who wishes to acquire some competency of knowledge of its streets and squares, does wisely if he confines his earlier investigations to the main thoroughfares, the great trunk lines of road and highway, leaving to a time of greater experience and familiarity his exploration of the more detailed features of the place. So the godly inquirer, who would be in the counsel of the Most High as to the course of future events, does well if he seeks first of all to apprehend the points, the landmarks, through which the leading lines of distinction in the one great plan may be assuredly known.

Failure to apprehend such lines led, some two and a half centuries ago, earnest men in this country to take to themselves, in all their literalness, words which had been written for times which are still in the future, and for circumstances which have not yet arrived, and with the high praises of God in their mouth (as they said) and long broadswords in their hands to smite with vigour those they conceived to be the enemies of God and of the truth, until their weapons ran red with their fellows' blood. Failure to apprehend such lines has led, since then, to an endless confounding of things that differ, and leads now to the oft-repeated question as to the coming of the Lord for the Church—will it be before or after the Great Tribulation?

We would suggest one or two points through which the lines of distinction drawn as to the coming of Christ may be apprehended, and, which followed out might consign to the limbo of defunct difficulties the question thus stated.

First. OF TITULAR DISTINCTION; that is, of the difference of *Title* of the Coming One.

Here there is no difficulty. In the four Gospels the most frequently recurring title of the word made flesh is "the Son of man"; that is, the representative of humanity, and especially of humanity in its typical form, its Jewish mould; and such was Christ in the flesh.

Up to a certain definite point, when everything changed, the coming foretold in the Gospels is emphatically the COMING OF THE SON OF MAN, so much so that the Lord Himself, up to this definite point, invariably speaks of it in the third person—"when the Son of man cometh," not "when I come."

It is most notable that from the time at which He sat down at the right-hand of the Majesty on high the title "Son of man" was only once applied to the risen Christ, and that under circumstances entirely exceptional.

The expression was used by Stephen¹ at the moment when the former rejection of the Christ as on earth by the Jewish people culminated in their latter rejection of Him as in the heavens, when, by the Spirit of God He again sent unto them: and in it Stephen linked together that former and that latter Jewish rejection.

The term was never used after that day²; it is to be found no more in the Acts of the Apostles; it never occurs in the Epistles; it is clear that it has no connection with the present dispensation, that it is not applicable to the relationship of Christ to the Church.

In the Epistles, the coming for which saints looked and waited then, and—if in the counsel of God—look and wait still, is that of the "Lord Jesus Christ,"³ of "Christ,"⁴ of "the Lord."⁵ Or at times His Coming⁶ is referred to in

¹ Acts vii. 56.

² The expression in Rev. i. 13 is *not titular*; it implies only that the figure was in human form "like to a son of man."

³ 1 Cor. i. 7; 2 Pet. i. 16.

⁴ 1 Cor. xv. 23.

⁵ 1 Thess. iv. 15-23.

⁶ 1 John ii. 28.

terms of affectionate impersonality, as though there was no other than Him in all the universe.

Men speak now of "THE COMING OF THE LORD," and they speak correctly: they have learned the term from the Epistles. But so speaking, their words are of that which is totally different from "THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN." In the first case, the title has a distinct relationship to the Church, the coming is for the Church; in the second, there is no Church relationship in the title, and none in the Coming.

Second. OF CIRCUMSTANTIAL DISTINCTION; that is, of the difference of the accompanying circumstances.

The definite point at which the Lord Jesus ceased to speak of His Coming in the third person, and from which He spoke of it as in the first, was also the period at which He first spoke of it as being FOR His saints, was *after* He had instituted the Lord's Supper—that characteristically Church feast—and when in anticipation He already stood on the resurrection side of the grave, having "finished the work"¹ which He had been given to do. "I go to prepare a place for you. . . . I COME AGAIN, and will receive you unto Myself"²; and again a little later, when, not in anticipation, but in fact, He *had* finished the work, He said, "If I will that he tarry TILL I COME."³ A little later still He who had said, "I go," went,—and the circumstances that surrounded His going are clearly and simply narrated—there is no possibility of mistake about them.

He led those to whom He had spoken the words quoted above out of Jerusalem;⁴ He lifted up His hands and blessed them. While in the act of blessing He was parted from them, carried up into heaven, and a cloud received Him from their sight.⁵

So He went—His going known only to them, seen only

¹ John xvii. 4.

² John xiv. 2, 3.

³ John xxi. 22.

⁴ Luke xxiv. 50.

⁵ Acts i. 9.

by them, with no accompanying signs, no marvels, either in the heavens above or in the earth beneath. There was no manifestation of divine might or of angelic glory. No Jerusalem dweller of the time dreamed of that which was taking place within view of the city; no unbelieving eye saw, or ear heard, that which was done that day, even though it was one of the most stupendous events of creation's history.

So He is to come again;¹ such is to be the manner of "THE COMING OF THE LORD." When He comes to receive His own to Himself, *they* will hear His voice, *they* will see His face, earth will no more hear or see than did Jerusalem when He went: secretly, suddenly, swiftly, without outward sign or wonder. So He will come, and we will go, caught up to meet Him in the air. Who is there that will not cry "Hallelujah"?

In what sharp contrast to this in every particular is the sure word of prophecy concerning the COMING OF THE SON OF MAN.

It is to be heralded by signs in the sun, signs in the moon, signs in the stars; by the shrouding of the earth in blackness; by the roaring of sea and wave; by the shaking of heavenly powers, as though creation below, above, alike trembled at the rising unto judgment of an angry God; while the stoutest hearts among men will quail and their bravest spirits blanch, as they ask one of another what the next terror will be.²

Then will be manifested the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and the tribes of earth will mourn, and at last THE SON OF MAN WILL COME with power and great glory; and *His* coming shall be as the lightning that, coming out of the east, flashes with deadly and destructive brilliancy to the west, manifested to all, seen by each; and they who mourned because of His sign will wail because of Him,³

¹ Acts i. 11. ² Matt. xxiv. 27-30; Mark xiii. 25, 26; Luke xxi. 25.

³ Rev. i. 7.

and thus the keynote of the wail of eternal hell shall be struck upon the guilty earth.

Who can fail to distinguish between these? or to see that in such distinction the question propounded is answered?

The Coming of the Son of man is to be after, immediately after, the Great Tribulation. That Tribulation is to be ushered in by minor troubles, which are the beginning of sorrows, it is to be occasioned by the rise of the man of sin, the antichrist, who is to find a restored Jewish people; a reconstructed Jerusalem; a rebuilt temple; and yet with all these events (extending over a lengthened period of years) between us and the Coming of the Son of man, the Coming of the Lord is THE HOPE put before the heart and the mind of each of God's saints, whether young or old, whether hale or frail. The aged and the feeble who are in Christ are still bid to look for and to wait for God's Son from heaven.

If the Coming of the Lord is at the other side of all these occurrences and events, then the bidding of an aged child of God look for it as his hope would seem like irony as grim as that which Elijah hurled at the priests of Baal, but God does not deal in irony when speaking to His saints, He *does* speak of this as "the Hope," and, therefore, the Scripture does not place the thickness of this sheet of paper, does not now put one single event, between the soul of the believer and the Coming of the Lord.

(W. H. H.)

"Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." The salvation of the believer is threefold: (1) he is first saved through faith in Christ from the judgment of his sins; (2) he then enters on the path from the Cross to the Glory, in which the practical and daily salvation, or sanctification—that is, separation from all that is contrary to the will of God—is wrought in him, through the indwelling Spirit and by the

written Word,¹ according to 1 Timothy iv. 16, where this practical salvation is connected with doctrine.

(3) But the salvation referred to in the words at the commencement of this article is the consummation of the work of redemption; it will take place when these bodies of humiliation are changed into immortality, and raised in incorruption. And to us, blessed thought! this salvation is nearer than when we believed. The chill of our night is passing, our day or morning star will soon appear, the shout, the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God shall gather us around Him for whom we wait from heaven.

This is not waiting for death; death is part of the curse, and is not our hope; if it were so, we should naturally ever place it at a distance. Every man expects a long life, and if events necessarily intervened of such duration before the Lord's return as would necessitate our all sleeping, death would be the prominent thought upon our mind, and not the completion of our salvation at our Lord's return.

It is difficult in a subject so vast and of such great importance to the Lord's people to be concise or short, but the following suggestions may be helpful to those who are studying the subject as to when the Lord shall return.

The saints of this dispensation are represented as a heavenly people, as an exalted people, being raised up with their risen Head.² This is our God-given position in grace; we are therefore called to walk in our earthly responsibility in accordance with our heavenly place—strangers and pilgrims on earth, our citizenship in heaven, etc.

Now as in nature so also in the things of grace: the watcher on the mountain-top, who has spent, it may be, many a cold, weary hour waiting for the sunrise, first sees the break of day, is the first to be bathed in the sunlight and to feel its genial glow; then, as he stands and looks from that height, he sees the day breaking in the far depths

¹ 1 Pet. i. 2; John xvi. 17.

² Eph. ii. 6.

beneath him, until the valleys are lit up with the sunshine, and the chill of night has passed away. Thus with the redeemed of the Lamb: we wait and watch for the morning, and that morning will break on us whilst the chill hours of night are still upon the world—the most chilling hour, for this is often just before the daybreak—*The Great Tribulation*. Not only tribulation, for that is ours, and all who will live righteous in Christ Jesus shall suffer it.

But some will say: What of worldly saints? Can they be said to be on the mountain-top and watching there?

Yes; grace gives them their place there. Their practical experience may be an earthly walk, darkness of soul, worldliness of heart, and yet they, as the Lord's, will be caught up to meet Him in the air when He returns. Will they then be no losers? Will they have equal glory with those whose life and walk correspond with their heavenly place? Oh, no; they will be sad losers, losers of reward, losers of glory. Some will be saved so as by fire: they will have to look at their life labour burnt up; busy builders, and yet they have never learned the divine pattern to build by; earnest strivers, but they have not striven lawfully; it may be, hinderers of the present kingdom, to be accounted little in the kingdom to come. This meets the difficulty, which is a great one to many, of how saints who are not waiting, but are worldly, can be gathered with the waiting and suffering ones. Some think that *The Great Tribulation* will be needed to awaken all before the Lord's return. But what about the vast multitude who have fallen asleep in Christ during eighteen hundred years? Many of them were worldly, and even died in darkness and doubt. Would tribulation on the living ones have any effect on them? We believe it is not God's way; but as we have sought to show above, reward will be as both sleeping and living saints have walked according to their high calling. But some may say, Why then should part only of Israel be

called to pass through a time such as was not since the world began? We reply, because God is about to bring them into earthly position. It is not a matter of their eternal state, or grace gathering to a coming Lord; as in Thessalonians iv., where we get His redeemed caught up out of the world to meet Him in the air, and so ever to be with Him. Not to meet Him at Jerusalem, not to see His feet stand on the Mount of Olives and to have to weep when they see Him whom they have pierced, as Israel will have to do.

Now unless we understand this clearly we shall be landed in utter confusion of thought. The late S. P. Tregelles asks this question: "If all the saints are to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, how comes it that the tares and wheat are to grow together till the harvest?" Then, he remarks, there would be no wheat left, only tares; but he does not seem to perceive into what difficulty his own arguments lead. In Thessalonians the saints have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air; have the angels of the Matthew xiii. been sent out prior to this to gather out of His kingdom all things that offend and work iniquity? If so, who would be left upon earth, for saints and sinners would be alike gone? But no; the Word shows us that there will be those who will be accounted worthy to escape those things that are coming upon the earth, and to stand before the *Son of man*.¹ There are, therefore, those who will escape; but how? Not by being caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and to be at rest with Him from their troubles. How then? By fleeing to the mountains.

Now if any one will take a map of the Holy Land he will notice that God, in His wondrous grace to His earthly remnant, has provided for them a place of safety,² Edom, Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon, Israel's enemies in the flesh in the past, their land to be the place of refuge in the future. The fugitives have to fly but a com-

¹ Luke xxi. 36.

² See Dan. xi. 41.

paratively short distance and they are in safety. The Anti-christ can no more lay his hand on them than the avenger of blood could on those who had escaped to the city of refuge.

If we recognise those two elect peoples of God, the one elected to a heavenly place, as the Body of Christ, thus caught up before the Great Tribulation; the other, God's elected people, to be brought through the Great Tribulation into a place of earthly blessing; the tares having been gathered out of His kingdom, they then shining out in that kingdom; we shall have no difficulty in understanding what otherwise is surely a strange contradiction. We shall see that daybreak first comes to the heavenly people—they caught up into the air are safe with their Lord; but the darkest, the most chill hour of the night, will have settled on that guilty age until the day of the Lord reaches to earth, and the Sun of righteousness arises with healing in His wings, and the sevenfold light of a coming Eden has bathed a once groaning earth in all its glory.

(J. A. B.)

“THE GREAT TRIBULATION!” This is one of the Spirit's unique expressions, occurring only in Revelation vii. 14. Elsewhere, we read of tribulations from various causes. By *much* tribulation, we are told, must we enter the kingdom of God. While of coming days of vengeance—that shall nevertheless be but the harbinger of brighter and more blessed days than Israel ever knew—it is written there shall be tribulation, ay, great tribulation, like unto which none ever hath been, neither shall again be. That description most clearly links itself on with that of our present subject—namely, the Great Tribulation.

That the Lord is coming at such a time is blessedly true, as indeed is the reality of His coming again. But whether

coming FOR the dead and living in Christ, or, with all His saints, is, thanks be unto God, not matter of opinion, but of plain revelation, to which we ask our reader's most careful and prayerful attention—Psalm cxix. 17–19. There are many marks that characterize and define the times of Great Tribulation. The Lord Jesus, when speaking to the multitude, as Matthew xiii. records, presented truth in quite a different aspect to that He did when speaking to His disciples alone, as is narrated in Matthew xxiv. and xxv.

In Matthew xiii., when explaining to His disciples that which shall take place at THE END of the age, the Lord said the Son of man shall send forth His angels (messengers), and they shall gather out of His kingdom (not, be it well observed, out of the world, but out of His kingdom shall they gather) all things that offend, and them which practise lawlessness!

Moreover, we know from verse 30 that this gathering up of the wicked will PRECEDE the gathering of the elect from the four winds, from the one end of heaven to the other. For He shall say to the reapers, "Gather ye together FIRST the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them."

These things being done will bring about the fulfilment of that scripture which saith, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of THEIR Father."

This consummation of the age is not to be confused with the sign of the Coming of the Son of man, which title presents the Lord in His Coming again as the One to whom the Father hath given authority to execute judgment.¹ Whose voice when sounded shall bring forth, not some from among the dead; but shall bring forth all (individually so) that are in the graves, each of whom, ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS, shall come into resurrection of life or into resurrection of judgment, with which may be compared Romans

¹ John v. 27.

ii. 1-16 and Revelation xx. 11-15, noting well the place and relation that works have in the issue of weal or woe. Fit opposite and instructive contrast to all which is the word affecting those who, whether dead or alive, being in Christ, shall, by the voice of the Son of God, when by Himself He come and with trump of God and arch-angel voice shall shout aloft to Himself in the air such as answer to, "NOT BY WORKS of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the laver of re-generation and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He shed upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour: that having been justified by His grace, we should become heirs according to hope of eternal life."¹ Further, the end or consummation of the age shall be indicated as drawing nigh by many coming in His name saying,—

"I am, and shall deceive many."

Wars, and rumours of wars shall also be; still, the end is not yet. For nearing that point there shall be troubles that, though terribly great and severe, shall be but the travail pains of ZION'S labour, that will issue in a nation being born in a day, brought forth by her who *before* she travailed and *before* her pain came was delivered of a man-child.²

"This gospel of the kingdom shall also be proclaimed in the Roman part of earth for a witness to the nations, AND THEN shall the end come!" Before and unto which shall be found again on the earth in the city of Jerusalem the temple of God, in the holy place of which shall be seen standing the abomination spoken of by Daniel the prophet (he reading let him understand). Then may they in Judæa well flee into the mountains Withal, praying erewhile that this may not befall them in the winter or on a Sabbath day, so limiting their flight (comp. Acts i. 12; Josh. iii. 4). But

¹ Titus iii. 5.

² Isa. lxvi. 7.

rather in the energy of grace that brought a Lot out into a place of safety ere any of Heaven's righteous judgment was poured forth; so may they take warning and fly. While others, Noah-like, shall pass through the sore judgments of these days of vengeance and be brought forth saved, since they shall have endured unto the end.

For now shall one be taken and the other left.

Taken in judgment—left for blessing. For as were the days of Noah so also shall the days of the coming of the Son of man be. Gathering together what we have written we see as follows. There are sorrows that import in meaning birth-pangs.¹ These shall have a definite beginning and end, unto which end he that endureth shall be saved.

The people affected thereby are the subjects of the gospel of the kingdom, which leads them to the observation of Sabbath days and the law of Moses pertaining thereto. Jerusalem, with the temple of God therein, and the land of Judæa are indispensable necessities in the whole case. There is a blotting from off the earth of many who shall not know until the full swoop of the righteous judgment by the angels of the Son of man come upon them; even as they of Noah's day knew not until the flood came and took *them* all away. Thus the wicked shall be taken away from among the *living*, who will be *left saved* upon the earth, within the compass of the kingdom of the Son of man.

All which is the very opposite of the present operation of God. For now he who is in the mind of God will stand in doubt of such as observe days unto pleasing God.² While neither in Jerusalem, nor yet in temple made with hands, nor in the land of Judæa, are they specially interested unto doing the will of God concerning them in Christ Jesus. Then, LOOKING TO HEAVEN (NOT to earth), from whence we await the Saviour, the Son of God from heaven, we know that the dead IN CHRIST, as well as the living IN

¹ Compare Mark xiii. 8, margin.

² Gal. iv. 10, 19, 20.

CHRIST, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, shall be raised, the former in incorruption, and the latter putting on immortality, shall be caught up into the air from among the other dead and living who are not in Christ, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Wherefore it is evident that, since these latter things are nowhere in the Scriptures connected with the former, the Lord Jesus will come for the Church, which is His Body, before the time begins to run in which it will be possible to please God and do His services by carrying out such observances as Matthew xxiv. bespeaks, unto the travail-pains, and consequent deliverances of Judæa land with Jerusalem city; the tribes of Israel having again the temple of God, in which, and unto which, His acceptable worshippers shall gather; whereas, any who come not up thereunto, upon these in the days that follow shall judgment from the hand of the Lord come.

(J. B.)

THE COMING OF THE CHRIST.

IN the constellation of the Lyre, and near to the brilliant star Vega, which can be seen now in the October evenings about half-way between the zenith and the Western horizon, there is a little light-giver, known to astronomers as Epsilon Lyræ.

To the naked eye it appears a single star of the fifth magnitude—that is to say, one of the smallest that twinkles at us out of the void spaces of infinitude.

But let the slightest optical aid be employed—that of an ordinary field glass, for example—and this apparently simple luminary is resolved into two well-defined radiant centres, and is seen to be a twin-star.

Nor is this all. If we examine this group of two with a high telescopic power, each of its members will be found to be a fine binary pair, with a whole heaven stretching between it and its companion system.

Thus the star-gazer might describe ϵ Lyræ, as a “star of the fifth magnitude,” as a “twin star,” or as a “double double,” according to the degree in which his vision had been helped while he beheld it. Each description would be accurate, inasmuch as it would be a statement of *what the observer really saw*.

Differences of point of view of the distance of the object, and of the aid afforded to the gazer's vision, must be taken into account in the examination, not only of the works, but also of the Word of our God. Nowhere does this principle apply with greater force than in those parts of the Word that point forward to the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Old Covenant scriptures treat largely of Him, whom they style “The Coming One,”¹ but we do not learn from

¹ Ps. cxviii. 26, lit.

them that He is to have a first and a second coming. In their pages the two events are foreshortened into one. Truly the writers of these pages testify beforehand of "the suffering of Christ and the glories that should follow," but they leave no appreciable interval between those sufferings and those glories—"His visage so marred more than any man," and "kings shutting their mouths because of Him" immediately succeed one another. And whatever light the reader may or may not possess as to the reason of this phenomenon, it is very needful that he recognise it to be a fact before we proceed further.

Two specimen prophecies from the Book of Isaiah may be referred to by way of proof—namely, that in the eleventh chapter, where Christ is anointed to His office of Ruler, and that in the fifty-first, where He is anointed in His character as Saviour. Let us seek in both to distinguish the fulfilled from the unfulfilled.

The first three verses of chapter xi. were accomplished when the Lord Jesus was here upon earth. Truly the sevenfold operation of Jehovah's Spirit was then upon Him. He did not "judge after the sight of His eyes," as witness such passages as Luke xiv. 25-35, and John ii. 23 to iii. 3. He did not "reprove after the hearing of His ears," as witness His replies to all, friends or enemies, who drew near to question Him. But the fifth verse introduces us to a new and still future scene, as the quotation in 2 Thessalonians ii. 8 (which see) largely testifies. Only when He cometh again to earth will He "slay" the "lawless one" with "the breath of His mouth." Only then will He introduce the righteous and glorious reign described in the remainder of the chapter.

We have the Lord's own commentary on the prophecy of Isaiah lxi., when, in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke iv. 16-21), He read the opening clauses thereof, down to the proclamation of "the acceptable year of Jehovah." "And,"

it is written—*and* what?—"and the day of vengeance of our God?" Not so, although these are the words that follow from the pen of Isaiah. "AND HE CLOSED THE BOOK," leaving the sentence incomplete. If He had finished it, under the then existing circumstances, He could not have added, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."

Thus there is a break in the prophetic word where we should least expect it. An interval that has already lasted well-nigh 2000 years has to be allowed for between two consecutive verses, or even between two members of the same phrase.

The Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke explain this interruption. They record the presentation of Himself by the Lord Jesus, as King and Saviour, to a people who should have been ready to receive Him. They bear witness also that, in spite of the convincing proofs of His Messiahship, and His persuasive attitude towards them, that people rejected Him. There is a point in each Gospel where He accepts His rejection, and it is from this point that we first are made aware that He will have two advents—one to suffer and the other to reign. He had come into the world, and men were about to thrust Him out of it. God will bring Him again into the world, and then it will be otherwise. What was left untouched in the way of judgment, victory, and manifestation of kingly authority at His first coming will all be made good to Him at His second. His earthly people shall say, "Blessed is the Coming One in the name of the Lord." Until then they shall henceforth see Him no more. His enemies shall be made a footstool of His feet. This henceforth He expects.

Such is the testimony of the first three Gospels (concerning the fourth Gospel, which *begins* with His rejection, John i. 9-11, it is not now the time to speak in detail). All three contain predictions of the second coming of Christ, as Son of man (in glory, His own, and the Father's, and of the

holy angels), to Israel and the nations. All three foretell the signs that shall herald, and the events that must precede this coming (*cf.* Matt. xxiv., xxv.; Mark. xiii.; Luke xxi.) In all three the second advent itself is BUT ONE EVENT, and the aspect of it that concerns the Church—the heavenly people of the present age—is nowhere suffered to appear. This is another FACT, the due apprehension of which is of the utmost importance unto a right knowledge of the truth we are considering.

For the ultimate revelation, which differentiates the second advent into two distinct acts, we must come down to the date at which the epistles were written. After Israel had rejected the Messiah—not only on earth, but in heaven—God called out His servant Paul, and made him the Moses of the new dispensation. To him specially was committed the unfolding of the mysteries of the time that now is. These “mysteries” are secrets which in other generations had not been made known unto the sons of men, as they were now revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets of the new economy. One of these “mysteries” is, that of the Church—namely, “that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs and fellow-members of one Body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel.” Another “mystery” is, that the Church’s calling and history being parenthetical, the parenthesis will be closed by the descent of the Lord in person, to raise the dead and change the living in Christ, and to receive them unto Himself, away from the hour of trial, which is about to come upon the world.¹ Here at last is THE PROMISE and THE HOPE—God’s promise and His people’s hope throughout the evil age, which has set in since our Lord was crucified.

Hence the coming of the Christ, which, to the Old Covenant prophets who saw it afar off, appeared as ONE coming, resolves itself into *two* subsequent to His rejection.

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 51-54. 1 Thess. iv. 15-18.

Not only so, but even as the first coming included His coming to Bethlehem and His coming to Calvary, so the second coming is now subdivided into two distinct moments—namely, the moment when as Son of God He will come *for* His saints into the air, and that when as Son of man He will come *with* His saints unto the earth.

CHRIST IS COMING. HE HAS COME AND IS COMING AGAIN. Wherefore "let us hold fast the confession of the Hope without wavering; for He is faithful that promised."

A. P. MACDONALD.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF ASSEMBLIES.

“PROVE all things” is a definite commandment, a divine decree, and any candid mind will acknowledge that necessity always exists for it, and that it is fitting that any order of things upon this earth, whether natural or spiritual, should be tried and tested to the fullest possible extent by such standard of its quality and character as can be shown to be reliable and authoritative. In matters scientific, for instance, it is clear that all conclusions, however widely accepted, must be subject to the test of ascertained fact; and as new facts are ever being brought into view, conclusions are also ever being found to be inconclusive and even incorrect, and to require constant modification to bring them into line with truth.

Much more does this principle obtain with regard to things spiritual, to “the things pertaining to the kingdom of God,” and to the things “touching the King.” Of such nothing is known except through the Scriptures, and as the experience of the centuries has shown how slowly men come to the knowledge of the truth, how liable they are to error in their quest for wisdom, and how perceptions are warped and understandings are affected by tradition and by environment, it follows that every conclusion at which men have arrived and every institution which has been established through their means, not only *may* but *must* be tried and tested to the last degree,—not by results, or apparent results, not by the measure of good, or apparent good, which has been wrought through the thing tried, but by the Word of God, the Scripture of Truth, the only standard as to the will of God and the way of Truth.

In the earlier part of the present century a few devout men were led to apply this principle to the existing “systems of religion,” with the result that they and others were

obliged—first with trembling and uncertain steps, afterwards with greater decision and boldness—to separate themselves from all such systems, and to seek to raise outside, in obedience to God, a corporate though limited testimony to the unchangeableness of His counsel and of His way, and to bear a collective though partial witness to the sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ for them and for their needs.

With the history of this movement we have here nothing to do, we cannot concern ourselves with the record of the ways of those (deeply indebted to them as we are) who, rejecting all names of human device, were dubbed by people about them "The Brethren," a senseless appellation, which, in spite of its senselessness (or perhaps because of it), met with popular acceptance and is heard to-day wherever religious people speak the British tongue. Nor can we pause to consider the unhappy events which divided those who were just beginning to learn to walk in separation to God, and enabled their adversaries to garnish this objectionable appellation with the equally objectionable adjectives, "Exclusive" and "Open."

Were it desirable to avoid allusion to this division in these pages it would be impossible in fairness to do so, as its reactionary effect partly explains the error in the position which those for whom this is written occupy at this present time.

Of the ground taken subsequent to this division by those to whom the term "Exclusive" was applied, I say nothing, not from any feeling of disrespect to them, but because I confess I regard their position as one of hopelessness.

Almost equally hopeless, it is to be feared, is the place occupied by those who are now correctly described as "Open Brethren," whose stronghold is tradition, whose boast is that they follow in the footsteps of "the first Brethren," meet as "believers only," and "desire to maintain the fullest fellowship with all the children of God." To these saints,

who are, in many cases, well-meaning persons, no further reference will be made here: they are outside the scope of this article, of which the application is only to those who, "having been gathered together"¹ unto the name of the Lord, definitely and distinctly; "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,"² meet together, knowing that He is in the midst, and that His fellowship unto which they were called³ forms the House of God, the assembly of the Living God, as much in the present day of remnant weakness as in the past season of apostolic power.

Even of those who, through the grace of God, have been gathered unto the name of the Lord, it is impossible to contend that their ways in all things stand the test of Scripture. In some important particulars it appears to be clear that the tradition of the elders and the reactionary effect of former divisions still obtain a place, colouring the vision and moulding the thoughts of many who do honestly desire to "walk in the truth."

One particular line in which, as it appears to me, those just described have erred from the Doctrine is that which affects the relationship of the assemblies to, and their dealings with one another. First, in the case of several companies co-existing in one large town. Secondly, in that of the different assemblies in a given district. And, Thirdly (confining our attention in the first instance to this country) in that of the whole number of assemblies throughout the land.

The present position of almost any assembly may be described as one of absolute independency: its concern is with itself alone, its control is within itself, and its confusion as to what its fellowship with other assemblies is, as well as to whom that fellowship extends, is complete. On the one hand, the circle of definition is so sharp that companies separated by a couple of miles act towards each other in exactly the same way as they would if they were 200 or

¹ Matt. xviii. 20.

² 1 Cor. v. 4.

³ 1 Cor. i. 9.

2000 miles apart; on the other hand, there is no circle of definition at all: no one knows exactly who he is supposed to be in fellowship with.

Thus in a large town (for it is in such case that the matter becomes most marked) where there are say, ten meeting-places where disciples break bread, each of the ten companies will be found to be so entirely independent of its neighbour that the fact of a person by removal of residence taking his part and place in one is held to have deprived him of part and place in another, in which, it may be, he had been a "leading man among the brethren,"¹ called of God to, and fitted of God for, the work of oversight, having the closest knowledge of the needs of the meeting and of those in it. But all his work in and labour for that company, his care for its saints, and his help in its ministry, are held to have come to an end, as he is now "in fellowship in another assembly," to which he had been, in all solemnity, furnished with a letter of commendation, as though he had come to it from some far and unknown land.

Thus is presented the spectacle of ten units, ten "churches of God," but of no unity nor of any united action, and consequently there is neither the one mind and the one mouth among those in one town gathered to the name of one Lord as to what their fellowship embraces, nor any effort to attain to such oneness as is a matter of absolute commandment.² This has a serious practical bearing on many points. For example, question the leading men in the assembly in A— Street, in the town of X—, as to their relationship to an adjacent company, of which the origin is doubtful and the constitution uncertain. They will reply they "always thought we were all in fellowship with it." Pass on to the assembly in B— Street and put the same question, and the answer there will be that they "never thought any one acknowledged it as in fellowship." Then call upon the

¹ Acts xv. 22.

² Rom. xv. 6.

friends in C— Street, in the hope of arriving at some solution of the difficulty, which your investigations have only increased, and they will tell you calmly that they “never thought anything at all about it.”

Persons with limited acquaintances of the matter may perhaps think that this is a fancy sketch, having its origin in an unbalanced imagination; those with knowledge more full will admit that it is a statement of sober and sorrowful facts, made still more serious by the remembrance that “God is not the author of confusion,” and that in things spiritual where God is not the author Satan is.

This state of unhallowed confusion prevails throughout the districts and throughout the land. There are many meetings which are acknowledged by some, disowned by others; there are meetings and groups of meetings concerning which the minds and consciences of many are exercised and are troubled: again and again it becomes necessary to commend or to refuse to commend to one or other of these doubtful companies, but there is no way in which authoritative information can be obtained, and the result is that at last individual inquiry is made, leading to individual action, which is simply a shameful admission that the fellowship which professedly belongs to Christ Jesus as Lord has broken down in helplessness.

This line of the subject might be pursued to almost any extent. The uncertainty, the doubt, the strife, the positive evil, that are one and all the fruits of the congregational idea—that heritage from the “first Brethren”—might be enlarged upon, and example after example given of the wrong that is wrought through the maintenance of that idea, but it would all be little help; the more profitable effort here will, I hope, be to direct attention to the more excellent way, THE Way of apostolic times, of Scripture story, and therefore of the precept of God.

In that Way there was nothing of the confusion of con-

gregationalism, no trace of independency: however many the number of gathered ones in any town, no matter how necessarily great the number of meeting-places, never does the Holy Spirit apply the term "churches of God" to the companies in any given town or city—the address is always to the "church of God"; the phrase is always in the singular; so closely were the saints in fellowship linked in one that the manifestation was of unity, not of independency, and this was in and through the unity of oversight, the conduct and the actions of overseeing men.

When the unit was a district, not a town, then indeed the "churches of God"¹ therein were addressed, but they were churches of which the fellowship and the connection through their overseeing brethren were so close and so defined that these were able to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.²

In furnishing Scriptural proof of these general statements it will be fitting for us to begin at Jerusalem, where the work began, and at the Acts of the Apostles, with its graceful and graphic record of the earliest days of Christian life and practice, for in that book and in the history of those days is to be found the germ of all that was afterwards more fully declared in the letters of the apostle of the Gentiles.

It will be necessary in passing to take note of the references to the *numbers* of the disciples. We are so accustomed to the feebleness and littleness of a remnant day that it is not always easy to realize the numerical strength of the saints gathered in apostolic times, and numbers or indications as to numbers are never given by God without set purpose.

I would also direct attention to one short sentence of fundamental importance descriptive of the relationship of

¹ Gal. i. 2.

² Gal. vi. 2.

saints upon the earth, as to which it is not too much to say that understanding of its meaning would have saved much conflict and delivered many from the Snare of the Devil.

Of the THREE THOUSAND baptized receivers of the word concerning Jesus the Crucified as Creation's Lord and God's Christ, the steadfast continuance in four things is recorded. (1) In the apostle's teaching, (2) IN THE FELLOWSHIP,¹ (3) in the breaking of the bread, and (4) in the prayers. To the disciples who in these things continued others were added, daily added, and that by the operation of the Lord—though by the agency of His servants—who walked in like ways and behaved themselves in like manner. They were all

IN THE FELLOWSHIP,

and this dominated their dealings one with another and characterized their conduct in all the things of God.

To that fellowship (the number of the males in which had become about FIVE THOUSAND) the term "*the church*" was first applied.² To those who composed it no man durst join himself, but *believers* were the more ADDED TO THE LORD, multitudes both of men and women, until, as the Word of God increased, the THOUSANDS that were in the fellowship in Jerusalem were MULTIPLIED GREATLY.

Does any one contend seriously that all these disciples, these thousands and tens of thousands "in the fellowship," broke bread in one place and as one company? Such a contention could surely be but the child of the despair of him who urged it, and ordinary reasoning is lost on a desperate man—he *will* turn to his own way, and such he must be left to go.

¹ So the Greek in Acts ii. 42. The words are unhappily obscured and weakened both in A.V. and R.V.

² The use of the word in Acts ii. 47 is unauthorized according to the best MSS. See R.V.

But if it be admitted that this multitude of necessity met for the remembrance of the Lord in many different places, even as is the case now in the large manufacturing cities in the land, how was their unity so preserved and manifested that "the fellowship" and "the assembly" are synonymous terms, either of which correctly describes the whole?

I suggest with all respect that to this question there can be but one answer—the unity of the assembly was preserved and manifested in the oneness of its oversight circle, a circle composed at first of "the twelve,"¹ later of "the apostles and elders,"² and later still of "James and all the elders"³—a circle of rule and guidance for all "the assembly," which when occasion arose "called the multitude together" (the very fact of their having to do so shows that the multitude was not in the habit of coming together), and again, when occasion arose, came together for conference and consideration of difficulty, and which moreover was in the habit of being together at place and time known to the brethren generally.⁴

A proof of this, almost startling in its completeness, is furnished in an unexpected manner through the storm of trouble that broke upon the saints at the time of Stephen's martyrdom: in that great persecution against the assembly which was in Jerusalem⁵ they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria, *except the apostles*; that is to say, that while "the fellowship" was spread over a geographical district of about 100 miles in maximum length by 45 in mean breadth (or an area of about 4500 sq. miles), the one oversight circle was providentially preserved in its completeness in the midst of that scattered fellowship; hence, though perhaps the wildest advocate of

¹ Acts vi. 2.² Acts xv. 6.³ Acts xxi. 18.⁴ Acts ix. 27 and xxi. 18.⁵ Acts viii. 1.

independency would probably shrink from asserting that still all met to break bread in the one place, the Holy Spirit in describing the calm that followed the storm when the zealot who was the chief instigator of the persecution was converted to God, speaks of the many companies in that large district in the singular and as one. Then, it is written, "had *the assembly* rest throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria, and *was edified*; and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, *was multiplied*,"¹ and the immediately following words, quite naturally as it were, suggest the manner in which the unity was still kept, for "Peter" (who lays quite as much stress upon his eldership as upon his apostleship) "passed *throughout all*" (the italicized word "quarters" is a human addition grievously marring the sense), he being one of the most active and prominent of those in the circle of oversight care for the assembly, and, as one might say, a representative of that circle.

The same line of things, though not wrought out in the same compactness and completeness, is laid down in the Epistles as to the fellowship of assemblies in Gentile lands.

Some years ago a minister of State in this country, wishing to reassure the minds of those who were apprehensive of the effect of the Russian advance in Central Asia upon British interests in India, advised the fearful to "get a large map"; and the advice would be of value at this juncture to those who seek to understand the geographical allusions of the apostles of Christ, and without this understanding much of the force of their letters will be lost,—districts will be confounded with towns, and provinces with cities, with much the same effect as if words addressed to an assembly were adopted and acted upon by an individual.

¹ Acts ix. 31, R.V. In this reading all the best MSS., compared with which all others are insignificant, agree.

When, on the contrary, there is any measure of understanding of the geographical terms the effect is almost as that of a new revelation. There is then seen to be a divine recognition of district fellowship and a definite bringing into personal association of leading men in that fellowship such as is to-day doubted by some and denied by others; and this makes the relationship of any who thus discern the mind of God to, and their part in, periodical meetings of elder brethren in any district where God-gathered assemblies exist, not permissive but mandatory; that is to say, to them it is not that such meetings *may* be held and that they *may* attend them, but that the meetings **MUST** be held and to them they **MUST** go.

Again, in the most unexpected manner, as was the case in the matter of the Judæan persecution, did an event of the day serve to bring into prominence the relationship, not only of the saints in one assembly, but of the assemblies in a district.

This time the visitation was providential, famine had desolated the Syrian provinces, and the saints therein felt the pinch. The Apostle Paul laid himself out to stir up the minds of Gentile saints as to their indebtedness to their Jewish brethren, and to lead them to practical acknowledgment of the debt, with the result that not only were the poor saints in Jerusalem succoured, but that we are able to perceive something of the link that existed between adjacent churches in the apostolic age.

It is noticeable that in this connection the apostle constantly refers to the Christians in the fellowship in terms of their *district* or provincial relationship, and not in terms of their local habitation in town or city. Thus he writes of "them of Macedonia and Achaia,"¹ not of Philippi and of Corinth,² he boasts of "Achaia" to "them of Macedonia,"

¹ Rom. xv. 26. Philippi and Thessalonika were cities of Macedonia, Corinth and Cenchrea of Achaia.

² 2 Cor. ix. 2.

and he gives commandment to the "churches of Galatia:"¹ Macedonia, Achaia, and Galatia, being each provinces of the Roman Empire, containing many towns within their borders. If it is objected that there is in this use of terms nothing to show that there was any special fellowship holding place amongst their inhabitants, I answer (1) that it is not the way of God to describe His saints in terms that are devoid of spiritual significance, and that as "all that be in Rome" bears a definite meaning and describes a certain circle of fellowship, so "them of Macedonia" also bears a definite meaning and describes a larger circle of fellowship. (2) That there is inspired acknowledgment of the meeting together of those of the churches of Macedonia for the purpose of united action, in that the result of such meeting is recorded; for when Paul had declined to accede to the collective request of these churches² that he should himself be the bearer of their gifts to Judæa, they, acting together in his presence, with his authority, and beyond doubt at his instigation, "chose"³ one of their number, who was their apostle,⁴ and the outward embodiment of their united fellowship and action, to travel with Paul and his company, and convey the gifts to Jerusalem. That this was the outcome of *personal* association is plain from the meaning of the word translated "was chosen"⁵; it is equally plain that it would be idle to suggest that in a day in which travelling was immensely difficult *all* those in fellowship in a district as large as Scotland were together in person: hence the question arises, How were these assemblies thus together so that they could and did act as one? And to this Scripture analogy

¹ 1 Cor. xvi. 1.

² 2 Cor. viii. 4.

³ 2 Cor. viii. 19.

⁴ 2 Cor. viii. 23, the word rendered "messengers" being literally "apostles."

⁵ The word is *χειροτονηθεῖς*, the meaning being that the indication of the choice was by the outstretched hands of the brethren present towards the one in whom their confidence, for this special work of bearing their alms, was placed.

makes answer that they were together in the person of those who were "leading men" amongst them—"elders," "overseers."

As supporting this, the words of the Apostle Peter, around whose person the matter so greatly revolved in earliest days, are notable—"Elders who are AMONG YOU I exhort, who am also an elder. . . . Act as shepherds to the little flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof"¹—for in the most unmistakeable, and the most unqualified manner they link together into unity the elder brethren in "Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia"²; that is to say, in a Roman province embracing well-nigh the whole of what is now known as Asia Minor. They regard the charge of those brethren as one, "the little flock among you," and they place that charge, the younger ones as a whole, in submission to these, as a circle complete and connected, in the midst of which the flock was.

Further support is found in the fact that the Apostle Paul, writing to the assemblies in one of the districts which Peter thus connects together distinctly, addresses himself to the "spiritual ones" among them *as a whole*, exhorting such that, while proving each his own work, they should in bearing each the other's burdens so "fulfil the law of Christ."³

Who is he that, reading such scriptures with open mind and understanding free from prejudice, laying them side by side that one may throw light upon and interpret another, will deny that in them can be seen the unity of the church of God in any given town, and the close and compact fellowship of the churches of God in any given district? or that admitting this as a proposition, can deny that in this matter there *is* failure and there *is* wrong amongst the great bulk of those gathered to the name of the Lord in these last days?

Where failure is acknowledged the path to recovery has

¹ 1 Pet. v. 1, 2.

² 1 Pet. i. 1.

³ Gal. vi. 1, 2.

been found, and where wrong is recognised half the battle of the right has been won; and so it will be in this matter. In days that are long gone by, but yet days of a close parallelism with those now present, when the need of the wall round Jerusalem was owned,¹ God stirred up the heart of a man in a distant land, and strengthened that heart against all the discouragement of "troubulous times" and all the opposition of the enemy, both without and within, and the wall *was* raised again, and Jerusalem was once more builded "as a city that is compact together,"² to which the tribes of Jehovah could go up to, an ISRAEL TESTIMONY, a national witness, though they were but a part of a scattered whole—to give thanks to Jehovah's name and to do Jehovah's will.

Thus it may be again, and thus blessing and gladness—the blessing and gladness of those who are willing to do all God's will—may be found and maintained by the remnant of His heritage whom he has "called to His feet."

That there are difficulties in the way none can doubt, but difficulties are meant to cast the true servant upon His Lord and to brace his heart unto self-denial in this latitudinarian and Laodicean day: and in this matter, self-denial, true and lasting, will be required—not such, indeed, as is likely to be trumpeted forth from religious platforms or blazoned out in the religious press, but such as will brighten with a soft and golden lustre the "crown of glory that fadeth not away," and will gain the whispered "Well done" of the secret of the Lord.

W. H. HUNTER.

¹ Neh. i. 3.

² Ps. cxxii. 3, 4.

BECAUSE I MAY.

I THANK Thee, Lord, that I *may* live
 A simple life of child-like trust,
 Believe, obey, receive, and give,
 Because I *may*—not that I must.
 'Tis bliss and ease unspeakable
 Simply to live from day to day,
 Knowing that all is only well,
 Since left to Thee, *because I may*.

Tried, tempted oft, and suffering still,
 Since all my life is planned by Thee,
 I would accept Thy perfect will
 As Love's best, only thing for me ;
 For I, with unencumbered heart,
 Would let Thee ever have Thy way,
 And cultivate the artless art
 Of trusting Thee *because I may*.

Sweet life of trust ! May it be mine,
 In foretaste of the ease above,
 Each care and burden to resign,
 And lean and rest on perfect Love !
 Nor would I bow because I must,
 But glad to yield, pleased to obey,
 In loving, fearless, constant trust,
 I'd serve and sing *because I may*.

THOUGHTS ON UNION

SUGGESTED BY THE PRESENT ASPECTS OF POKERY AND
PROTESTANTISM.

PAPAL union or Roman Catholicism is based upon the presence of a threefold and perfect unity in doctrine, in worship, in government. "Church" history, however, reveals to every honest reader how vain is this proud pretence. Fathers and grandfathers, popes and councils, are found contradicting one another upon nearly every doctrine, "vital and secondary." Yet the edifice of popery stands out before the world in colossal grandeur as the—

MODEL OF RELIGIOUS UNITY,

and in fact multitudes are enchanted by this one aspect of Romanism, its marvellous oneness.

To all who search the Scriptures this material uniformity loses its fascinating wonder, and appears but the development of that pleasing form of godliness which characterizes these last days of the present age. For fifteen centuries Romanism has been organizing this system of religious union, and all the policy of "Liberal" governments has not yet shaken this masterpiece of human apostasy. The frequent internal dissensions between pope and cardinals, and archbishops, and bishops, and priests, etc., etc., are accommodated with a skill that no nation or secular society can boast of. The compromising, unifying, absorbing system of Jesuitism is labouring harder than ever to preserve papal union amid the manifold social disintegrations of these latter days.

Now within the ancient walls of this grand religious union we find the most heterogeneous elements at work. A continual and characteristically varying policy is labouring to decide national questions. A sad percentage of

unbelief exists among the priests, and still more among the people: and correspondingly a growing "liberality" (?) as to so-called "secondary" doctrines, the one essential point that is insisted on being that all remain within the unbroken walls of this "Catholic" union.

Now let us briefly review union as manifested among the various forms of Protestantism. Passing over the unfortunate names by which Protestant sects are known, and the humiliating proportion of mere national and mere formal religion among those who have "a name to live," we find a growing—

DESIRE FOR CHRISTIAN UNION

among some of the denominations who are agreed in their common PROTEST against Popery. This sentiment is in many cases merely negative, arising from an abhorrence of sectarian envy (Phil. i. 15), and void of any spiritual longing after the unity of the Spirit. But every watchman of this night in which we are living meets with many a weary pilgrim—

SEEKING REST

in God's assembly from wanderings to and fro among human religious forms, methods, and systems. This desire for spiritual union has well-nigh overcome the bitter feeling with which Christians in the Protestant sects were wont to regard each other, and "unsectarianism,"¹ or, correctly speaking, pansectarianism,² has raised platforms from which every so-called "secondary" doctrine is excluded in order that believers may meet together as one in Christ; and so far the object of this movement is spiritual, based not only upon a protest against sectarianism, but upon a longing after the union of Christ's members on earth. Modern Protestant union, therefore, is offering a *mild* protest against

¹ Unsectarian means pertaining to no sect.

² Pansectarian means pertaining to all sects.

sectarian profession—I am of Bunyan, I of Knox, and I of Wesley.

But now let us pass by that most excellent way, love (1 Cor. xii. 31), within the newly built walls of Protestant union, with God's Word as lamp to our feet and light to our path (Ps. cxix. 105). Let us with a pure conscience, speaking the truth in love, ask our fellow-saints "belonging to" the various "bodies" thus agreeing to differ:—Does the pansectarian union really tend to remedy schisms, which are condemned by God's Word as works of the flesh? (1 Cor. iii. 3; Gal. v. 20). Does it sanctify them in the truth (John xvii. 17), or does it not rather "tolerate" a score of opposing systems of worship, church government, and ministry? Does it judge false teaching on the saving truths of the Gospel? (Gal. i. 8).

Instead of answering dogmatically these solemn questions, we may consider briefly the striking contrast and also similarity between Papal and Protestant (pansectarian) union.

I. THE CONTRAST.

Whilst Romanists agree to unite in a human priestly head, assuming as such infallibility, pansectarian Protestants who are believers have a stronger, yea, an eternal, bond of union in Christ. Whatever be the differences existing in the court and domain of Leo XIII., the one, and in reality the only, bond union is in him. On the other hand, Protestants of all sects who believe know Christ, and Him alone, as Head. Farther, while there are children of God living within this apostate Papal union, these saints do not, cannot enjoy the liberty of Christ as do believers who are in Protestant sects. All alike who believe have life in Christ, but that life is weakened or strengthened by the atmosphere in which it breathes. Every believer is a member of the body of Christ and an heir of God, not

because of, but *in spite of*, the human religious "body," be it papal or Protestant, to which he may belong. But it is a natural and manifest fact that the fruit of the Spirit either becomes matured or is lost in the bud according to the external influences amid which the plant is growing. So much for the contrast between Popery and Protestant pansectarianism.

II. THE SIMILARITY

between these two aspects of religious union may not have exercised the conscience of God's children as it ought to have done. In both cases the one desire and effort is to remain within an essentially disunited union, which tolerates and in many respects develops internal errors, but which succeeds in preserving a united and fascinating form.

Now many children of God, whilst rejoicing in the blessed assurance that through grace they stand on the right side of the above solemn contrast, have been exercised in regard to the similarity just noticed. With their pansectarian brethren they know they are one in Christ, but the very fact of being Christ's (1 Cor. iii. 23) has made Christian union to them a solemn and blessed reality and thus has brought about a necessary separation from human systems. Carrying out honestly, fully, scripturally the very principles partially accepted by pansectarians, these believers are led by God to ignore every individual sect as such and consequently to further—

IGNORE THE AMALGAMATIONS OF ALL SECTS,

and to seek fellowship with all saints who are thus truly unsectarian; that is, belonging to no sect.

Finally the tendency to religious union is manifestly world wide.

Popery, union in a human priest.

Sectarianism, union in a special dogma or creed.

Pansectarianism, union of Christians in sects as believers only.

Church of God, union of believers as in Christ and for Christ, according to 1 Corinthians i. 10. "God is faithful by whom ye" (the church of God in Corinth—see verse 2) "were called into a fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

JOHN S. ANDERSON.

WHERE AND WHEN

DID PAUL WRITE THE LETTERS TO THE CHURCH OF GOD AT CORINTH?

HAVING concluded his visit to Corinth, Paul took ship for Syria, and calling at Ephesus, left Priscilla and Aquila there, whilst he himself sailed thence for Judæa. Landing at Cæsarea, he went up to Jerusalem to greet the church in that place, and thence went down to Antioch, to the church to which he especially belonged.

He is then found taking another journey, through Galatia and Phrygia and thence to Ephesus. Ephesus, it should be observed, was the principal city of the small piece of country which in Scripture is called Asia. This is not to be confounded with the Asia Minor of modern geography, nor is it even so large as the district marked "Asia" in such a map as No. 6 of those bound up with the "Englishman's Bible" (to which map the reader is requested to turn).

The peninsula now known as Asia Minor contained countries mentioned in Scripture under the following names. First, Peter in the inscription (that is, the inspired heading, or opening words) to his first letter enumerates besides Asia, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia and Bithynia. Secondly,

it is clear from an attentive perusal of Acts xvi. 6, 7, that neither Phrygia nor yet Mysia were in Asia (as in the map mentioned they are made to be) any more than were Galatia and Bithynia. Thirdly, there are yet other countries, as Cilicia and Pamphylia, which it is unnecessary for our present purpose to recount.

Now from Revelation i. ii. and iii. we learn the names of seven cities which were in Asia, and to these Colosse and Hierapolis may be added.

Paul then having arrived at Ephesus, remained there some two and a quarter years or more, during which time the Word of the Lord was sounded forth throughout the whole of Asia (that is, throughout the "Asia" of Scripture, containing the nine beforenamed cities and a few smaller places), whilst Paul *himself* was daily teaching in EPHESUS in the school of Tyrannus.

Now towards the end of this time Paul purposed to go to Macedonia and to Achaia, and thereafter to Jerusalem, and he sent Timothy to Macedonia in advance. This is what we learn from Acts xix. 21, 22. Now compare with these things what we may read in 1 Corinth. xvi. First, the allusion to what he had said to the churches of Galatia (when visiting them). Then, his *purpose* to come to them after he had visited Macedonia. Next, that Timothy might come to them before Paul himself did. And finally, the salutation from Asiatic churches, especially from that particular church in Ephesus which had been meeting at the house of Aquila and Priscilla. Can there be a doubt that this epistle was written in Ephesus towards the end of Paul's visit there? Probably Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus (some of whom may have been of the household of Chloe) arrived in Ephesus soon after Timothy had left (Acts xix. 22).

On turning now to the second letter to the church of God which was at Corinth, we find that Timothy had

rejoined Paul (ver. 1), and that he (Paul) had not yet been to Corinth (chap. i., vers. 15, 16, 23). He had gone as far as Troas on his journey thither, and failing to find Titus (whom he wished to send to Corinth again), he had crossed over to Macedonia seeking for him (ii. 12, 13). That he had met Titus when he wrote this letter chapters vii. and viii. make clear. That Titus and the two other brethren mentioned in chapter viii. were the bearers of this letter seems pretty certain from the general tenour of it. Now while Acts xx. 1, 2, does not recount that which we have just learnt from 2 Corinth. ii. 12, and viii., it very clearly takes up the thread of the same story in telling us of Paul's going to Greece after he had given much exhortation in Macedonia. Greece, of course, includes Achaia, the country of which Corinth was the capital, as well as Attica (capital, Athens) and other places of no small importance in the world's history, but not so much as mentioned in Holy Writ. Thus we learn that Paul wrote this second epistle after coming to Macedonia and before leaving for Greece—namely, in the time between verses 1 and 2 of Acts xx.

C. M. LUXMOORE.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF ASSEMBLIES.

ANY attempt to ascertain for ourselves, and then to set before others, what is the teaching of God's word in regard to the fellowship of assemblies one with another is fraught with difficulties. Not the least of these finds expression in words to the effect that we are "drifting into Exclusivism"; a warning with which all, who ever seek to stir the consciences of fellow-saints as to this important matter, must be abundantly familiar. With this particular difficulty, then, we would seek help of God to deal.

At the very outset we would remark that we are not surprised at such a warning being uttered, and that we have no thought of making light of it. Whether we look back over the past forty years, or around us to-day, or within, as considering the tendency of the natural heart, we are compelled to own that the warning is a needed one. True, that with some, the language may be that of uninstructed timidity; while with others, it is a mere excuse for refusing what is distasteful. These are no reasons, however, for neglecting to give all the help we can to those who are honestly afraid of a repetition of much that has been so dishonouring to God in the past. Neither should they cause us to close our eyes to the dangers to which we ourselves are exposed in seeking to carry out the Divine principles.

It would be idle to affect ignorance as to the particular meaning attached to the word "Exclusivism,"¹ as used in this connection. Of course reference is made to the system of confederation of assemblies, instituted by our departed

¹ In using this term, we in no way admit its suitability, and simply take it as it is commonly employed.

brother in Christ, J. N. Darby. It will be impossible to effectually show the many and fundamental points of difference between that system and what we find in the Scriptures, without direct reference to the principles and working of the system itself. In making such reference, however, we desire to avoid every expression of judgment of individuals and their actions, and to confine ourselves to a consideration of their avowed principles. We believe that, rightly understood, the teaching of the Word of God in regard to the fellowship of assemblies, not merely will not lead us into what is thus called "Exclusivism," but that it will be our true and only safeguard from this as from every other error.

At the root of the whole system which Mr. Darby set up lies the doctrine that the "one Body of Ephesians iv. 4 is the divinely constituted ground of gathering." This is his own statement, endlessly repeated by those who have come after him. Naturally, we pay little heed to errors of doctrine, while our attention is quickly drawn to false practices. But false teaching is the parent of false doing; and if we would truly guard ourselves and others from the evil practice, we need to trace it to its source. This misapplication of the truth about the one Body to the mutual relationship of assemblies has led to a perfect jargon of confused and misleading expressions. All who have read the tracts or listened to the arguments of this school are familiar with the following statement: That one who is in the body in one place must be in it everywhere: and that if he is put out in one place he must be outside the body in all others. It never seems to occur to those who use such language that no assembly ever received any one into the Body, or can by any means put one out of it. We are not for a moment denying that a believer, put away from among themselves by an assembly of God, according to His Word, should stand in exactly the same relationship to all

other God-gathered believers. What we object to is the wholly erroneous language in which this is expressed, because the language betrays the underlying false principle. As a result of this principle, the unity of action that may be attained ceases to be the willing obedience of all to the commandment of the Lord. The consciences of believers are not exercised as to subjection to the authority of Christ, but as to the maintenance of a party discipline, which is supposed to be identical with the unity of the Body.

In Ephesians iv. we have a seven-fold unity put before us. One Spirit, with whom is associated one Body and one Hope of our calling. One Lord, and, with Him, one Faith and one Baptism. One God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all. The unity of the Spirit comprises the whole, and every believing one has his part in the whole. How entirely without warrant, and how unspeakably mischievous, to select one item of this seven-fold unity, and to set it forth as the ground of gathering!

The one and only ground of gathering is that given us in 1 Corinthians iii. 11. The apostle is writing as to the building together of the assembly at Corinth, when he declares that he has laid the foundation, though others may build upon it, and adds: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Paul laid that foundation at Corinth when he first preached "Jesus Christ, Him crucified," among them.¹ Paul began to build on that foundation when he baptized Crispus and Gaius and the household of Stephanas, the first fruits of his preaching,² and taught them to own Jesus Christ as Lord.³ Others had followed Paul, and the building was growing; but warning was needed as to the kind of materials they were building in. It was possible to introduce wood and hay and stubble, which presently would need to be con-

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 2. ² Acts xviii. 8; 1 Cor. i. 14, 16; 1 Cor. xvi. 15.

³ 1 Cor. i. 2, 9.

sumed. And even those who had been rightly built in might have to be removed from their place, as in the case of the man of chapter v. In all this work of bringing into, and putting away from, the church of God which was at Corinth,¹ men were acting in responsibility to God. But what a contrast this is to everything that we read about the Body. No man receives into the Body, but God Himself sets the members therein.² And no member, set there by God, is ever removed.

The preaching of Jesus Christ, then, is the laying of the foundation, not only for the salvation of the sinner, but also for the formation of each assembly. Those who have believed on Him as their Saviour are to be gathered unto His Name, to own Him as the Lord in the midst³; and the whole exercise of the spiritual gifts, by which the flock is to be shepherded and instructed, and the order of the house of God maintained, must be in the recognition of His lordship.⁴ The relationship of assemblies one to another grows out of this, and is indicated in the words, "with all that in every place call upon the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours."⁵ The more true and loyal and complete is the subjection of each assembly to Christ, the more closely will they be knit one to another. But if the bond between them be that of a common agreement to stand by one another's acts, and to refuse fellowship with all who will not become parties to such an agreement, they have become a human confederacy; and Christ is outside, as much, and in the same sense, as He is outside all other human systems.

As a solemn and painfully instructive example of the fruits of this sort of confederation, we here print, in full, a circular issued by the "Exclusive" meeting in Toronto, to all the other Canadian meetings of their fellowship, in the

¹ 1 Cor. i. 2.² 1 Cor. xii. 18.³ Matt. xviii. 18-20.⁴ 1 Cor. xii. 3.⁵ 1 Cor. i. 2.

month of October, 1882. It has relation to the great dispute which was at that time rending to pieces the hitherto compact organization established by Mr. Darby.

BELOVED BRETHREN,—

At a meeting of the Assembly in Toronto on the 13th Sept., 1882, to consider our position with respect to the decision at Park Street, London, England, on the "Ramsgate Question," after patiently waiting upon and remonstrating with a few brethren who refused to accept that judgment, we were forced, in deep sorrow of heart, to withdraw from them, in order to affirm and maintain the principles of the Church of God (Eph. iv. ; 1 Cor. xi. 19; 2 Tim. ii. 19).

*Our acceptance of the judgment of the Park Street decision is not based upon a knowledge of the facts and circumstances connected with it, but upon the ground that there is "one body and one spirit."*¹

This decision we fully receive as having the sanction of the Lord, and must therefore be binding upon us—for "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. xviii. 18).

We adopt this course in order to preserve fellowship with our brethren who are endeavouring "to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace;" otherwise we should deny the very foundation of the Church of God, and the truth of the one Body as a principle of gathering.

In order fully to realize how much is involved in thus bowing to a judgment, without "knowledge of the facts and circumstances connected with it," we need to inquire what was the overwhelming authority attaching to this judgment, and calling, not merely for submission to it, but also for the excommunication of all who could not conscientiously obey it. The facts are beyond dispute. Dr. Cronin, of Kennington, had broken bread in an unrecognised meeting at Ryde. Some judged him guilty of grievous sin in so doing. The Kennington meeting, with many more, upheld him. While the point was agitating all the associated meetings, the dispute reached such a pitch at Ramsgate that the meeting there divided into two over it. Then came the question which of these two Ramsgate meetings was to be

¹ The italics are ours.

recognised. The meeting at Park Street, Islington, held an inquiry, and decided in favour of the section that condemned Dr. Cronin. While nominally the judgment was as to two rival companies at Ramsgate, actually it was as to whether Dr. Cronin, and all who continued to receive him, were to be cut off. For this action the authority of Matthew xviii. 18 was claimed. Other of their meetings had decided in favour of the opposite view; but because the Park Street brethren issued a peremptory decree they carried the day. Writing with regard to the same matter, under date of November 19, 1881, Mr. C. H. Mackintosh thus puts the matter.

As regards "the Ramsgate Question," we cannot but own the mercy of God in allowing it to be settled by an assembly of His people gathered at Park Street, London; so that we have only to accept their decision. If that judgment be wrong, God, in His own time and way, will make it manifest; but for assemblies elsewhere to re-open the question is simply to give up the ground on which Brethren have gathered for the last fifty years, and to resolve ourselves into fragmentary independent meetings, each having no connection with the other.

Could there be clearer evidence of what we pointed out above, that the principle adopted by these brethren could only result in the destruction of all conscience towards God, and the introduction, in place of it, of a rigid party discipline? But if this is not of God, neither are the "fragmentary, independent meetings, each having no connection with the other." Let us never forget, however, that it is not enough to desire that which is itself according to God. We need also to attain to it by ways that are of God. Infinitely better the sorrows and the reproach belonging to our feeble and imperfect carrying out of Divine methods than any human device for more quickly attaining to the semblance of the thing desired. The maintenance of Mr. Darby's system was only possible by means of a centralized authority. The Word of God pro-

vides for no such authority, and human arrangements had to be resorted to. So long as his personal influence remained paramount, the party was kept together; but as soon as resistance was maintained by any considerable section, a break-up commenced.

Would to God that beloved and honoured servants of God, still held fast in that system, might be brought to see how far the first false principle has carried them from the ways that be in Christ. While we pray this for them, we would seek to learn a much needed lesson through their sad errors. Let us, with renewed fervour of love, endeavour to carry out all the Divine instruction as to God's house. Let us patiently and diligently seek to teach others what God has shown us. Let us cultivate the fellowship of assembly with assembly, and endeavour to realize our united, as well as our separate responsibilities. Let us in every way promote the coming together of overseeing brethren, for united prayer, for mutual counsel, and for the common study of the Scriptures, especially in their bearing upon the care and guidance of the flock; and where cases of sorrow and perplexity arise in our midst, let us seek that such brethren may be brought together to endeavour unitedly to discern the mind of God in regard to them.

Other writers in this number deal more particularly with these matters; but we would add that in such a course, we believe, the Word of God shows us one great safeguard from the snares of "Exclusivism," on the one hand, and from the mischievous pretensions of individual brethren who love to have the pre-eminence, on the other hand. Assemblies could never be cut off with the stroke of a pen, by a few party leaders exercising a central control, if there was a widespread fellowship of elder brethren of all assemblies. Hence such fellowship has been a thing unknown in the meetings of Mr. Darby's confederation. On the other side, the arrogant doings of brethren who are of a

Diotrephes spirit must needs be largely restrained where such fellowship is maintained.

Above all, let us remember that nothing of what our God has given to us is intended to make us independent of Himself. The flesh in all of us would like a clear, sharp-drawn line of action, which the natural man could grasp and carry straight through. But this would not cast us upon God, and it would therefore be carried out in the energy of the flesh. The difficulties in the way of maintaining the utmost possible measure of fellowship between assemblies, varying so greatly in attainments and practice, cannot be easily overestimated. But our resource is still as of old—God and the word of His grace.

We would further add a word of earnest appeal to brethren who are resisting every attempt to bring together the overseers of the assemblies in various districts. It will not be contended that it is according to the mind of God that each assembly should be unconcerned as to the condition and ways of all others. Equally contrary to the revealed will of God is any human system of central control. Now all resistance to that which the Scriptures indicate as the right way of promoting the fellowship of assemblies directly promotes both of these unscriptural alternatives. Strange as it may sound to some, it is assuredly true, that "Exclusivism," and the most unholy latitudinarianism, among those professing to be gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus have mutually strengthened each other. The revolt from the one extreme is continually driving people over to the other. If some are said to be pressing for the whole truth of God, without duly considering the need of gentleness, meekness and forbearance towards those who seem "dull of hearing," how important that those who are conspicuous for these qualities should be found on the side of the truth. Nothing pleases Satan more than to see grace and truth ranged on opposite sides. Never is his defeat

more complete than when, even as at Calvary's cross, mercy and truth are met together.

(A. J. H.)

WHEN the remnant of Judah returned from their Babylonish Captivity we find them engaged in a work very different from that which occupied the nation during the reign of Solomon, at which time the Temple of God was builded together for His habitation. We refer to the recovery of the stones out of the accumulated rubbish of years.¹

Now the first operation in this work of recovery out of the rubbish would be to bring the stones into the light and into a prominence for a time, but when builded in with other Temple stones this special prominence would cease, they would simply occupy their place in the entire buildings of the Temple.

It is not our desire to unduly exalt any one truth of God, and yet it may be for a moment that truths which have lain hidden in the traditional rubbish of the past may seem, by some of our readers, to have an undue prominence given to them. Without overstating our point, we would yet desire to bring into the full light and give special place to that which it is our wish eventually should but occupy the position originally designed by the great Architect.

Space will not allow us to enter here fully into the reason why certain truths have been so lost sight of by those who have professedly returned to a scriptural position and to the taking of God's Word alone as their guide; yet this much we would say, that no better way has Satan of obscuring the truth and driving men from it than the raising up of something which appears to resemble the will of God, and yet in reality is intended to mislead and misguide the saints. This has always been in the past and is

¹ Neh. iv. 10.

to-day Satan's mode of working.¹ And, through fear of being again misled, many minds shrink from even investigating a truth.

But upon this principle what should we not give up? How could we earnestly contend for the Faith, once delivered to the saints? Rome has taught transubstantiation and Lutheranism holds consubstantiation. Are we to give up the Lord's Supper because of these false doctrines? "Baptists" have made baptism, at least in measure, their centre of gathering, meeting as "Baptists." Some brethren teach household baptism. Shall we give up baptism as instituted by the Lord? Is it not that we should the more carefully inquire why Satan has thus made counterfeits of the realities?

The whole subject of oversight and rule in the present aspect of the Kingdom² seems to have fallen into the background, and perhaps the sad failure of some of the later attempts to carry out the will of God in these things has done much to drive saints from the truth. But let us remember that adding to the Word of God is not more disastrous than neglecting to carry out His will. This is abundantly demonstrated by the present point of the history of those who have sought to return, as we believe, with some measure at least of honesty of heart to the old paths. Whilst on the one side we have a rigidity and decrepitude which points but too clearly to the decline of spiritual life, we have on the other hand a spirit of lawlessness, a dislike of all restraint, a repudiation of godly fellowship, and a doing of that which is right in every man's own eyes, which as plainly speaks of departure from God³ and a return to the elements of the world.

On turning to the first epistle of Paul to the church of God at Corinth, we find in the Spirit-breathed words a remarkable introduction to the epistle.⁴ We professedly believe in

¹ See 2 Tim. iii. 8.

² Col. i. 13.

³ Judg. xvii. 6.

⁴ 1 Cor. i. 2.

verbal inspiration, but do we allow the exactitude of the Word of God to have its due weight with us? The apostle here not only addresses the church of God at Corinth, but all that in every place call upon the Name of the one Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours. Now let us link this thought with chapter v., and last clause of verse 13: "Wherefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."

We would not now discuss what is meant by the expression, "put away from among yourselves," but cite this verse to show that the putting away was not a mere local act, but that all saints in *every* place owning the one Lordship were called upon to carry out this discipline. Some may ask how could this be accomplished, and in the present state of independency it is plain if this be the will of God it could not be. But supposing things were according to the will of Him who will yet work all things after His own pleasure, and there were a God-given oversight seeking to act in happy fellowship together, how perfectly simple this would be. And in fact this very command in itself as given in the epistle to Corinth would seem unquestionably to point to a condition of things which no longer exists, or only exists in a small measure.

We have known one present a letter of commendation which had been given years previously, seemingly proud of its antiquity. Again, we have met with one expecting to be received on a twenty years' ago acquaintance. While in some assemblies, were you to ask how many there are in fellowship, it would be found that perhaps for years there had been no revisal of the list, or public notice made to the assembly of those who had withdrawn from its fellowship. Again, as to what assemblies in a locality were in a God-given fellowship, we fear it would be often most difficult to decide; and yet, alas! the one who receives a letter of commendation to-day, or with whom we may have had an

intimate acquaintance and brotherly friendship, because together seeking to walk in the light, may to-morrow be one to whom we could not give the right hand of fellowship and whom we could not address as brother. Neither could we have fellowship with the assembly *which, as such*, has openly declared itself in association with those holding fundamental error. Let it not be for a moment supposed that we would seek to weaken the responsibilities of a local assembly. We believe that where evil arises there it must first be judged, and no united oversight should interfere with this local responsibility to the Lord; but, on the other hand, should there be indifference, or refusal to act for God on the part of an assembly, it would be then that the united responsibility of the district would arise. In 1 Corinthians v. 4 the apostle directs that the local assembly, when gathered in the name and with the power of the Lord, should put away from among themselves, or put "without" (see ver. 12), the wicked person; "purge out" also (ver. 7); that is, put out from the midst of the gathered together company. This would, of course, refer in the first place to the church gathered in Corinth, but verse 11 would have a wider significance, showing the manner of life in accordance with godliness for all saints. The concluding clause of the chapter, again referring back to the *gathered* church of God in its first application, would, as already pointed out, give a far wider significance, applying to all that own the Lordship of Christ.

Now we are all agreed that in the case of unjudged sin in an individual believer—his will being done in him instead of the will of God—fellowship with God would be hindered and power for service marred. Is it not exactly the same with an assembly where unjudged sin is allowed? Will not its power be gone? Not only so; will not this affect the surrounding assemblies? If not, why is each church in the seven epistles in the book of Revelation

called upon to hear what is said to all the others? As has already been shown,¹ the Divine machinery for carrying out thus the will of God can only be through God-given guides who watch for souls and unitedly and collectively seek to rule the little flock of God that is amongst them.²

(J. A. B.)

In those past days of the working of God's grace, those typical days in which He first got to Himself a gathered people, and of them formed "the assembly in the wilderness,"³ in which Moses came to be, and in the midst of which JEHOVAH dwelt; an order of representation of the people and of the assembly was introduced and maintained, specially applicable to cases in which it was impossible or undesirable for the whole company to come together or to act jointly.

The order of representation was by the elder ones amongst the people—the God-acknowledged leaders of the tribes and families, who bore special burdens and upon whom particular responsibilities were laid.

We may gather from the terms of inspired description applied to these "leading men amongst the brethren" that the circle of eldership was at least threefold.

There were "elders of Israel,"⁴ whose oversight was national and comprehensive, including all in the Covenant; there were "elders of the assembly,"⁵ whose oversight was congregational, limited to those who paid the half-shekel and who were able to go forth to war; and there were "elders of the city,"⁶ whose concern was local—was as to the affairs and with the people in a particular place.

¹ Fellowship of Assemblies, by W. H. Hunter, *Needed Truth*, No. 5. p. 29.

² Comp. John xxi. 16-18 (Greek) with 1 Pet. v. 2.

³ Acts vii. 38.

⁴ Exod. xxiv. 1.

⁵ Lev. iv. 15.

⁶ Deut. xxi. 3.

In each of these circles an example may be given of the order of representation.

When the "elders of Israel" went up into the mount unto the LORD, when they saw the God of Israel and in His presence did eat and drink, they went as representing the drawing near of the blood-sprinkled people, whose thrice repeated profession of obedience had brought them into a new and more blessed, though more responsible, relationship to their God.

When the "elders of the assembly" laid their hands upon the head of the young bullock, which that assembly had brought and offered for its sin, they identified themselves with the victim to be sacrificed as representatives of the whole company; so that when the creature died it was as though all had died for the common sin. Hence through substitution forgiveness was for all.

Again, when the "elders of the city," near which the dead, the murdered dead, had been found, washed their hands over the blood of the heifer whose neck had been struck off in the rough and untilled valley, and proclaimed their innocence of the deed whereby the man had been done to death, they acted as representatives—men standing in the place of the inhabitants of the city which was their special charge.

Examples might be multiplied of this, but these serve to establish the principle as far as past days are concerned.

But it is clear that as it was in the earthly and in the past it will be in the heavenly and in the future, for in the coming days of glory, when God will have gathered to Himself all the Assembly which is the Body of Christ and the eternal dwelling place of the Godhead, and when the four-and-twenty elders fall down and worship the ever-living One, cast their crowns before His feet and cry first to their Creator,¹ and then to their Redeemer,² "THOU ART

¹ Rev. iv. 11.

² Rev. v. 9.

WORTHY," *they* will act and speak as representatives of the whole of that gathered Assembly, of all the members of that one Body, which has been redeemed out of every Hebrew tribe and every Gentile nation.

"The analogy of the faith"¹ would lead us to expect that that which was and which will be should be now, and surely enough it may be found that the order of representation is one of the first principles of the assembly of God.

In the injunction as to the way in which a sinning brother is to be dealt with—which the Lord chose as an exemplary incident, in connection with which He might naturally, so to speak, lay down the great fundamental doctrine of His presence in the midst of those who have been gathered unto His name as they together meet—upon which all assembly truth and order is now based, he decreed that at the third stage of the dealing the assembly is to be appealed to, is to be told of the wrong done, and that it is thereupon to become vocal: it is to find a voice, it is to speak; and so solemn is that voice and speech that neglect on the part of the offender to "hear the assembly"² leads to his excommunication.

How does the assembly *speak*? There is no difficulty in understanding how it *hears*, but where does it find the voice of admonition?

There is but one possible answer to such question. Where *can* the assembly's voice be found except in the mouths of its acknowledged guides? Those whom "the Holy Spirit has made overseers,"³ who in this case speak, not as in their own persons, but—in the strongest sense of the word—as REPRESENTATIVES, their voice being that of the assembly "in assembly,"⁴ of which they are a part, and in which they, with others, are gathered.

This order of representation at once interprets words of

¹ Rom. xii. 6 (Greek).

² Matt. xviii. 17.

³ Acts xx. 28.

⁴ 1 Cor. xi. 18.

difficulty in New Testament Scriptures, and is further established as a principle by the words it helps to explain.

It explains, for instance, the manner in which the saints scattered over all Judæa, and Samaria, and Galilee, were linked together into fellowship and unity such that even in their scattering they are described as one assembly.¹

It explains, too, the manner in which the assemblies in the province of Macedonia were able to act together in the choice² of the brother who was to be their "apostle," and generally it sheds a flood of light upon the matter of the FELLOWSHIP OF ASSEMBLIES, and of the true manner of working out, in a practical way, such fellowship.

We may probably be met here with the assertion that the fellowship of assemblies has no foundation in Scripture—is not to be found in the Word of God.

In such a matter mere assertion is idle, and cannot be expected to have weight in the minds and consciences of saints, even though it be heard from men of worthy and venerated personality, and heard too in tones of vehement utterance.

It is not required of such that they should show that assemblies are not linked together in the revelation of God. There is a lack of fairness in asking any one to prove a negative; but it is required that when the thing is pointed out in the Scripture they should either accept it or give godly reason for their refusal.

Neither fear of consequences,—with which we have nothing to do,—nor dread of future developments,—which may never arise,—can be urged as a *godly* reason for refusal of present action.

We ask then that consideration should be given to such words as these: "YE also, as living stones, *are being built* A SPIRITUAL HOUSE, an holy priesthood"³; for it seems incredible that any should deny that they link together the

¹ Acts ix. 31, R.V. (See note p. 36 of *Needed Truth*, Vol. II.)

² 2 Cor. viii. 19.

³ 1 Pet. ii. 5.

“elect strangers of the dispersion”¹ throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia into one definite house-fellowship, bearing with it all the privileges and the mutual responsibilities embraced in that term. And it is perhaps hardly necessary to add that each of these names is that of a province of the Roman empire, that the provinces so named are adjacent to each other, and that together they make up a district of about 800 miles in length and 280 in breadth.

If it is urged that the house building here is heavenly, necessarily embracing all saints, and therefore outside the sphere of human responsibility, we answer that the word (*οικοδομείσθε*) used by the inspired writer absolutely forbids such a thought. It is of dual significance, of twofold meaning, and may be rightly rendered either by the phrase, “Ye are being built,” a statement of that which is now going on, or by the command, “Be ye built,” showing what the will of God is in the matter.

Thus the word in its designed ambiguity meets the case both of those who are and who are not in the position contemplated by it. In the one case it commends the position, in the other it commands that such should be the position; but in neither the one reading nor the other has it any applicability to the heavenly and eternal House.

The believer's place in the heavenly House is an established fact: he has been built up² on the foundation and on the Rock. The act of building lies in the past; its result is eternal and unchangeable, and there is absolutely no command from God to man about it.

But just as concurrently with this heavenly building-up there is an earthly building-together³ of saints in any given

¹ 1 Pet. i. 1.

² Eph. ii. 20, *ἐποικοδομηθέντες* (*epoikodomēthentes*) having-been-built-up.

³ Eph. ii. 22, *συνοικοδομείσθε* (*sunoikodomeisthe*), being-built-together.

town (such as Ephesus, the chief city of Peter's "Asia"), in an assembly fellowship, which forms "House of God,"¹ and His "habitation through the Spirit"; so there is an earthly building into one of builded-together saints, a blending into unity of assemblies in a godly fellowship, enabling such to act together as a "holy nation" and a "peculiar people,"² as ONE "flock of God"³; and it is this that is declared in the words for which we have asked special consideration.

The working of this fellowship of assemblies—its *modus operandi*, as men would say—is rendered comparatively simple by the order of representation, which we have, as we hope, already established as past, present, and future in the Word of God; and with this agrees exactly the last chapter of this first epistle of Peter.

Therein may be seen, first, elder ones *among the flock*; they together, the flock all around them. Second, the flock *among them*; they separated one from the other; and, each in his own post acting as watchful and guarding shepherd, not only to those in his immediate vicinity, but, as far as in him lies, to the whole flock. And thus a cordon, a circle of overseers is formed round the flock, which is for God a spiritual house and an holy priesthood.

May God give us to see it, even as a feeble remnant thing, in this day of feebleness and of the remnant of His heritage.

(W. H. H.)

So manifestly real was the Fellowship of the assemblies of God in early days that, as if to silence all questionings and establish oneness of mind in the Lord, the Apostle in 1 Corinthians xi. 16 triumphantly says: "If any think to be

¹ 1 Tim. iii. 15.

² 1 Pet. ii. 9.

³ 1 Pet. v. 2.

contentious" (let him know that) "we have no such custom, neither

THE CHURCHES OF GOD."

Again, since in matters of doctrinal disagreement and kindred behaviour and need there is but ONE LAW for all the assemblies to learn and carry out as one man, this also shows the fellowship which God would have to be experienced and expressed by His churches. That there is such oneness of law is made plain by the letter sent to all the churches of Galatia, commonly known as the Epistle to the Galatians.

That oneness of His will for His churches is most forcibly set forth in Colossians iv. 16, where it is written: "When this epistle is read aloud among you, cause" (mark the responsibility) "that it be also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea." Moreover, that fellowship and responsibility of relationship are made plain and obligatory by the fact or truth that when a message must be sent to each of the "seven churches of Asia" John was bidden to write these in one book, and send it to the seven. Thus it was laid upon each church to see that its sister assembly got the book passed on from the one to the other. Not only so—their individuality and yet oneness are evident, as in the case of a musical symphony, with its various parts, all so different, yet making one harmonious whole. Or, like the many boards of the Tabernacle, that stood each with its two tenons in sockets of silver, while all were bound together with *four* outward rods covered with gold, and were also kept together by a bar that passed through the inside and middle—speaking thus of an unseen and a seen link of binding together. May we not remark to profit that there is voice of God to us in the *four* outward as against or together with the one inward? Indeed, are not these *four* bindings together found

again in Acts ii. 42, which carry so much in them?—as witness: (1) The Apostles' Doctrine, and (2) the Fellowship, (3) the Breaking of the Bread, and (4) the Prayers.

Besides, when the first European church of God in Christ Jesus imitated these of Judæa, mark how the Apostle rejoiced and gave God thanks, as see 1 Thessalonians ii. 13, 14 (R.V.). We have said that the oneness, as well as the individuality, of the many assemblies is evident; yea, we add, so evident as to completely destroy independency. For mark that each one in and of each several church that had "ear to hear" was required to hear what the Spirit saith to

THE CHURCHES.

Why what is said to the churches if there be not closest actual relationship with corresponding responsibility?

This too, notwithstanding that it is belied, if not denied, by the speech that bewrayeth those who talk about independent intactness and interferences, when those having "ear to hear" seek to heed what the Spirit requires the churches to carry out, in obedience to Him who is their only Lord. Moreover, is not all this made intensely solemn and practical by the word spoken to the church in Thyatira? where, in Revelation ii. 23, the Son of God (remember Hebrews iii. 6, R.V.) is heard to say that not only shall Thyatira know what He is and does,—they indeed,—but above and besides them He declares—

ALL THE CHURCHES SHALL KNOW.

Furthermore, it is most instructive, albeit it is very humiliating, to observe that this truth of relationship and responsibility is most heartily recognised in times of peace in the churches, whereas it is scouted and greatly resented in times of trouble and difficulty. Often too, at such times, it will be seen that brethren are most bitter against the very ones for whom previously they would have given their eyes,

reckoning such now as their enemies, and this only because they continue to tell to them the truth.

Notwithstanding, even now, if tidings come to the ears of a church of what God is doing elsewhere, may they not send any fitted ones to witness, and, if occasion offer, to help on the work of God? How much more if they hear of what Satan is doing? Yea, and if one already among such bethinks of one who may the more effectually help to meet the need, ought not such to bring such fellow-worker thither? See Acts xi. 22-26. Are not such commonly welcomed? And yet how commonly such are refused and suspected if it be a time of trouble! But why? How can it be deemed that such care, and inter-fellowship, and mutual endeavour to lead on in, and into, the mind of the Lord is of God when all is at comparative rest, if in times of unrest such course of action is esteemed as not of God?

Some, finding such as the foregoing to be unanswerable, but still wishing to maintain the wrong, the glaring anomaly they seem so fondly to love, turn round and freely assert that if the fellowship of assemblies is to be brought about into actual recognition through the coming together of leading men for conference unto possible oneness of mind and way in the Lord, then, misrule, because man's rule, with its concomitant evils, must follow. But we ask, Why so? And proceeding to answer, we suggest that the truth is in the very opposite direction. Else why did Paul seek unto those of reputation that he might not have run, nor even now run in vain? Oh! how much is in vain to-day! All for want of this clear scriptural requirement! Augmenting our answer, we say: Has it not been clearly shown in these pages by the Word of the Lord? and do we not need to wake each other up, lest, after all, Satan may be filling the mind and heart with groundless fears, and this in the determination to uproot and banish from the churches of God that as yet but little understood and feebly appreci-

ated work of and for the Lord commonly called "oversight"? Overseers in a single church of God were never intended to *supplant* the consciences *nor* to *destroy* the responsibility of the individuals composing the "rank and file" of such a church, but were and are meant to strengthen those of the churches, as they of the churches are expected to strengthen them.

Thus it is that in the Scriptures just what responsibility-privileges are specifically laid upon overseers are in a general, yet real sense, also laid upon all. One example of each may suffice—1 Peter v. 1, 2; Hebrews xii. 15. Agreeable thereto, the comings together of the various overseeing-ones of various assemblies of God need never supplant the individual consciences of those persons in such churches as are under them in the Lord. For just as in each given assembly God's check for and on the overseeing-ones thereof is those whom He calls to remember them, considering the issue of their life, withal taking care to

IMITATE THE FAITH,

yea, to obey, salute, know and esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake, so also God's check for and on the comings-together as overseeing-ones in and of churches of God shall be these very churches from whom they have come and to whom they go back; ostensibly the better fitted to stand beautifully before the saints in the Lord as examples of the flock. This is surely "without controversy," since none of the churches of God are permitted to be legislators or makers of laws. But one and all are commanded and required to bind or to loose upon the earth that which already hath been bound or loosed in Heaven by Him to whom ALL authority is given,—Him who is Lord and Christ,—and who as Son is over God's House, and therefore walks about in the midst of the churches that answer to WHERE are two or three having been

gathered into My name, THERE am I in midst of them, and this as Revelation i. 12-16 describes Him, and Revelation i. 17, 18, tells what He is and has. Therefore were the things written that are written, having the seven-fold call to him that hath ear to hear let him hear (and who shall dare to hinder), ay, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churchES.

(J. B.)

ONE hears not infrequently a fear expressed lest all this should tend to excessive centralization, and lead to the exercise by a few claiming to be "the oversight" of authority over many assemblies. We are warned that we should thus arrive at a state of things very analogous to that which obtains in the Roman Communion, where all have to be guided by the decrees of the Vatican, instead of hearkening to the voice of the Lord Christ. A little consideration will show that the fear is entirely groundless, and that the danger is very remote. Indeed, it is only magnified by the subtlety of the great Adversary, who seeks to work on our fears of being engulfed in the Charybdis of human federations only that he may cause us to be broken in pieces on the Scylla of independency.

In probably most of the assemblies of God in these lands it is customary for a few brethren in the assembly who are better taught in the mind of God than others, or who take more active interest or part in its work than the rest, to come together at stated times, or as occasion may require, to speak about the work of the Lord that they are engaged in. The details of this custom may vary greatly in the different assemblies: in some only a few very aged brethren will meet thus; in others almost every male in the assembly will be present. In this assembly the meeting will be held once a week or once a fortnight; in that assembly months

may elapse without the leading brethren coming together. But in all, or almost all, there will be, in some shape or form, an opportunity for the conferring together of those who seek to lead the saints in the ways of the Lord. And why do such come together thus? Is it not that they may help one another on in the ways that be in Christ, conscious, in some measure at least, that in their own individual doings and in their guiding of the assembly they ought all to speak the same thing, to be perfectly joined in the same mind, and also in the same judgment.

“The same mind” in 1 Corinth i. 10 is to be understood as meaning “the same object,” “the same purpose”; and in order that the will of God may be done in and through an assembly, it is above all things necessary that all should beyond all else “mind” (that is to say, care for and aim at) the glory of the Lord Christ. But if thus aiming all try different ways, the end cannot be achieved. Hence the twin exhortation to be of the same judgment; that is to say, each to let go and disregard his own opinions, views, and thoughts as to how the work of the Lord should be done, and seek to be taught this by Him, that all learning His ways may become of the same judgment.

This is then sought to be brought about in these meetings of leading brethren by mutual subjection one to another, but above all by subjection to His Word, while they speak together of whatever there may be that they have hitherto not been in agreement about or have not fully understood. Then, having learned together the will of the Lord Christ, they will seek to bring it about in and through the assembly; but in whatsoever measure their work is indeed of the Lord in that measure will they base all their teaching and exhortation upon a “Thus saith the Lord,” nor will they ask nor yet expect the assembly to believe or do anything whatever save as it can be clearly shown that thus and thus hath the Lord said, as in such a chapter and such a verse it is written,

The leader of disciples who is himself a true disciple, knowing that all authority has been given to Christ, will ever seek first indeed to own that authority himself, but also to help others to own it, and will keep himself from permitting any to yield their obedience to him instead of to the one Lord.

Now whatever claim that has which is usually known as a "business" or "oversight" meeting to be recognised as a thing of God in bringing about a unity in subjection to His will, certainly no less a claim must be conceded for a meeting where brethren leading in several assemblies can confer on points on which they are not of one judgment, so that many assemblies may be taught whatever is the one will of the one Lord; and if there be any who see a danger of such gatherings developing into a central authority which would usurp the place of the one Lord, then surely upon those who entertain such a fear (if, indeed, theirs is a godly fear) brotherly love for their fellows, and much more concern for the Lord's honour, will lay a double burden of responsibility to so link themselves with that which we suggest that their godly influence and weight may be used by God to avert the peril that they think they see, and to help in the continual maintenance of subjection to the Lord's will in the company of His called-out saints. For one thing is certain—that resistance to the Word of God, which He has already made known to us in the present, is not the way to avoid dangers which may be expected to arise in the future.

As many will have observed that God's way when He is doing work of restoration is to teach gently, and lead by easy stages, it may be helpful to point out a reason why the truth about the fellowship of assemblies has been brought to the front now rather than half a century ago.

At the time when God commenced to call out a people who should call upon His Son Jesus Christ as Lord in His

day of rejection, He was pleased to commence His dealing with a small nucleus of disciples gathered in one place on the Day of Pentecost. Through them He reached the many whom He added together, and for long in all this work of adding together He mainly used the apostles themselves and those who had previously been themselves joined to the disciples. That this rule may have been subject to a few exceptions does not alter the fact that it was the way in which almost universally God was acting. Thus there was amongst all believers, firstly in Jerusalem, subsequently in Judæa, later throughout a great part of the Roman earth, a natural and evident link of origin uniting the various companies of God-gathered saints. But in process of time all these churches were beguiled from the singleness which is toward Christ, until at last they ceased to bear any relation towards Him as Lord, and thus "apostolic succession" was irretrievably lost long ages ago. Now when in our days God began to exercise saints concerning their position in relation to the lordship of Christ, they were to be found enslaved in every variety of human organization, in the midst of which they had begun their spiritual life, and in which they had become entangled almost immediately they were born again. God first was pleased to deal with them as individuals, and by presenting before them the simplicity of the obedience unto Christ which He commanded, He freed them, in some cases gradually, in others with more suddenness, from the chains in which they were bound. Then He brought together these, who in the recency of their deliverance were very babes in Christ, and in particular He taught them to obey the simple and yet heart-testing command, "This do unto a remembrance of Me." They were gathered together to break the Bread. In many cases a company in one place might be quite ignorant of the very existence of another not far off; it could scarcely be otherwise. Thus we may sharply con-

trast the way in which God planted assemblies in this land of recent years with the manner in which such were established by Him in the days of the apostles. But whilst we carefully note this difference, and see how in our days God has been working simultaneously—and in a certain limited sense we may say independently—in different places, instead of working from a centre as in the first century, yet we must not allow ourselves to be deluded into the notion that the purpose of God in connection with assemblies is changed since then. On the contrary, we have to aim at bringing about in the present day, as helpers-together of Him, such a remnant testimony as shall bear the same relation to the testimony in the times of the apostles as the doings of Ezra and Nehemiah bore to the days of Solomon-glory, and to render such heart obedience, such true allegiance to the will of God as expounded in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles as that godly remnant of Israel rendered in their days to the Law of Moses and the other Scriptures which they had.

At first, when there was so little knowledge of one another amongst the embryo assemblies in Great Britain and elsewhere, we cannot wonder that there was so little fellowship between them. But when in process of time God had brought together many of the leading men from different parts, and they must have in some measure learned how far they had the same mind, we might perhaps have expected that there would have been an earlier seeking after the same judgment. Alas! the spirit of independence was so strong that a division was soon caused instead, and two hostile camps were formed; and it is the sad truth to tell that real fellowship was as little understood in one as in the other, and God's work has had to wait all these years that we might learn these two lessons at least: (1) That all attempts at bringing about union by subjection of the will and judgment of some brethren to that of others must

fail the present state of those who are called "Exclusive Brethren" most clearly shows ; (2) That it is hopeless to expect assemblies to come to one mind in some miraculous way without using the means of conferences of over-seeing men which God provides to that end is equally manifest from the example of so-called "Open Brethren."

Now that God is in grace again speaking to us from His Word of His way for the fellowship of assemblies, let it be ours to hear His voice and put our trust in Him, who will never lead us where He cannot protect us, nor ask us to walk where there are not steps for our feet.

(C. M. L.)

A TIME TO HATE.

IN the ministry of the Word of God very frequently prominence is given to exhortations to love, not too frequently, when the Holy Spirit thereby provokes to love truly. See 2 John, 3 John. It is, however, needful to remember that the same Spirit of truth constrains to hatred; and yet how seldom are saints exhorted to hate!

1. It is commanded, "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil" (Ps. xcvii. 10). It is as essentially of God to hate sin as it is to love God, and all who are begotten of Him. "Let us hate" is as fitting a word as "Let us love."

2. It is beautiful in its season. What! beautiful hatred! Yes, the hate which is of God; the abhorrence that springs from the love of His Name and His Truth against every fleshly thing that dares intrude. "A time to love, and a time to hate" (Eccles. iii. 1-11). Each has its season, and is beautiful therein.

3. The perfect example—"Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity." It is at the feet of Christ every lesson is best learned, and only there rightly learned; and yet how little we think of going there to know how to be angry and sin not!

4. A commendation—"But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which *I also* hate" (Rev. ii. 6). The divine approval is a sufficient satisfaction, and when He connects our hatred with His "which I also hate," then indeed may the servant be content to leave "against that day" the criticisms of his fellows. Enough to acquiesce in the mind of God now and to be in the channel of the Holy Spirit's love or hatred.

5. The love of the Truth begetting hatred of error—"Therefore *I love* Thy commandments above gold; yea,

above fine gold. Therefore I esteem all Thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way" (Ps. cxix. 127, 128). Perhaps nothing has ever interfered more with the course of the truth than the love of gold, and doubtless to that may be traced the turning aside of many, and the continuance in false ways of others whose minds have been exercised as to the ways which be in Christ. If, as the Psalmist, we are enabled to put a higher value upon truth—His truth—than upon all this world's goods and finest gold, *then* may we be expected to hate every false way.

6. "Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 23). Abram delivered Lot, his brother, and refused the goods of Sodom. The love of God, compassionate discrimination, earnest, zealous deliverances of brethren entangled, are allied with hating even a fleshly spotted garment. How much more the Babylonish garment steeped in error!

CHARLES MORTON.

SKETCHES OF ANCIENT HISTORY.

IV. "MOSES' WRITINGS" AND RECENT DISCOVERIES IN LOWER EGYPT.

THERE is to-day a faith and a Christianity which has in it far more of spiritual contamination and soul peril to younger children of God than the open infidelity which denies the Faith and scoffs at Christ.

Those who hold this faith and profess this Christianity speak in reverent terms of God, and utter respectful platitudes about the Lord Jesus Christ, professing to venerate His character, value His work, and admire His words, but avoid as far as possible the use of the Name of either the Father or the Son, choosing to speak of the one as "the Divine Providence" and to designate the other as "our Saviour"; for their delight is in generalities and abstractions and they shrink from that which is particular and personal, either as to the Godhead upon the Throne or as to man's dealings with God through Christ.

Moreover they speak reverently of the Word of God; of the Book which, as they say, contains "the charming stories that moved our childhood," "the soul-stirring strains of the sweet singer of Israel," and "the magnificent denunciations of the stern old prophets"; but—and herein is the mark, not of the Beast, but of him who will raise up the Beast—they deny, more or less, the GOD-BREATHED character of the Scripture, and while they talk of "theories of inspiration" and of "old-fashioned" and "exploded" "notions" as to the guidance and direction of the Spirit of God, they invite believers to bring themselves into "harmony with the times" and their minds into touch with "modern thought."

The learned men of this school, and they are many, are

much given to "Biblical criticism" and to "true Biblical defence"—of the two the latter being often the most mischievous.

In this they deal much with the text of the Scripture, and with great professions of impartiality and many disclaimers of bias they show from many proofs that appear to be infallible (until they are tested) how impossible it is that Moses should have written the Pentateuch, Isaiah the prophecies to which his name is attached, or John the Gospel of the Divinity of our Lord Jesus.

It is interesting and instructive to the humble believer in Christ and in the living and abiding Word of God to stand as one apart from all this and note how these strivings of restless human hearts are made to nullify and confound one another; as in the day¹ when the children of Ammon, and Moab, and Mount Seir came to cast God's people out of the possession which had been given to them for an inheritance, and when, instead of doing battle with the invaders, the believers in God stood still, and sang, and praised JEHOVAH'S Name, while He turned the swords of the adversaries against each other; and Ammon and Moab, first in confederacy against their friends from Edom, and then in high despite against each other, did God's work so thoroughly that "none escaped," and thus Israel was delivered, and the name of the place called the "Valley of Blessing" unto this day. Truly

"Though now we see Him not,
Yet earth and heaven tell
God sits as Sovereign on the Throne,
And ruleth all things well."

One point alone, serving to illustrate the foregoing observations, will be touched upon here.

Its importance need not be pointed out; it affects the writing of the Law as given through Moses; that is to say,

¹ 2 Chron. xx.

the first five books of the Bible as we have it which form the foundation of the whole and from which, as an armoury, the Lord drew the weapons with which He put Satan to the worst in the wilderness of Judah.

Furthermore, He plainly said that unbelief in "Moses' writings"¹ was necessarily followed by that unbelief in His words which meant and means death—eternal death.

In the face of this, while there is a vulgar atheism which gloats over what it terms the "mistakes" of Moses, there is also a refined "Christianity" which asserts that Moses did not write the books (from Genesis to Deuteronomy) in the form in which they existed in the time of Christ's earth life (and in which we have them now) at all, that they are not Moses' writings, but the writings of Ezra or some other scribe of the days of the return from the Captivity, who patched together sundry fragments of older writings, connecting the patchwork with additions of his own derived from tradition, or imagination, or some equally reliable source.

A leading argument in support of this assertion may be summarized here in the words of the author who advanced it, himself an ordained clergyman of the Church of England, a Doctor of Divinity, and one who held "the cure of souls" as the rector of a parish in a southern county,

This gentleman puts it that it is² "a reasonable inference that the ancient Egyptians had not advanced beyond the ideagraphic system of writing which we call hieroglyphics until a late period in their history. If so, the Israelites at the Exode had no knowledge of what we now term written characters but only of hieroglyphics, such as they had seen in Egypt. Whatever, therefore, Moses wrote must have been written in hieroglyphics; the two tables of stone were written in hieroglyphics, and consequently the Book

¹ John v. 47.

² "Hebrew Records," by Dr. Giles, p. 384.

of the Law, or the Pentateuch, must have been compiled in a later age."

A brief explanation of the terms "ideographic writing" and "hieroglyphics" may be useful here.

The first human attempt to preserve a record or transmit to a distance an account of any specially notable event would naturally be, and apparently was, by PICTORIAL REPRESENTATION, by drawing a picture of the event and of its surroundings; a method still in use among all peoples and found to be exclusively in use amongst the Mexicans when invaded by Cortes in the 16th century, they, although highly advanced in civilization, having no actual written characters at all, but using pictures taken on the spot as reports which they sent to their king in the capital, so as to keep him informed of that which was taking place in his realm.

This PICTURE WRITING, as it is called, is followed in the ascending scale of effectiveness and simplicity by what is termed IDEAGRAPHIC WRITING, in which a series of emblems, mainly of everyday occurrence in the life of the people, had certain meanings attached to them, meanings which were the same under all circumstances; thus, a hawk's head would represent wisdom, a waved line water, an old man age, a child youth, and so on.

The HIEROGLYPHICS¹ used by the Egyptian priests, and apparently by the priests only, were ideographic in character, but were obscure and complicated to a degree, as befitted the idolatrous mysteries with which they were connected.

The next system is that of WORD-WRITING. Such is now practised by the Chinese and Japanese, in which chosen signs represent words of one syllable, and compound words are formed by combinations of these signs.

¹ An example of the hieroglyphic character may be seen on Cleopatra's Needle, now standing on the Victoria Embankment of the River Thames in London.

Next follows SYLLABIC or CONSONANTAL WRITING, in which words were resolved into their first elements, and LETTERS were brought into use, representing, not words, but the sounds by which, in combinations almost infinite, words are produced. This in the early form in which the letter sounds are those of the consonants only or mainly, is that in which THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT were written.

Lastly follows ALPHABETIC WRITING in its present form, which was produced by inserting letters representing the vowel sounds between those which represented the consonants in the words, so making the word-sounds more determinate. Thus THE GREEK SCRIPTURES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT were written.

This slight sketch may serve to show the sting which lies in the words quoted above, from one who professedly occupied the position of a believer in Christ, and of a shepherd and guide of the little ones of His flock.

If these words were true, not only should we be plunged into a sea of doubt and uncertainty as to the authorship and authority of the Pentateuch, but our confidence in Christ would be gone, for He spoke of the books themselves as "MOSES' WRITINGS," and confidence in Him gone, all is gone; we can know nothing of God, nothing of Eternal Life, nothing of anything. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

It is highly interesting to observe the way in which this "destructive criticism" has been destroyed by the discoveries recently made in that part of Egypt where Moses once dwelt.

On the eastern banks of the Nile,¹ where the heretic city

¹ The sources from which the facts stated here have been derived are mainly Prof. A. H. Sayce's address to the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society, delivered Nov. 8, 1889, and Mr. W. St. Chad Boscawen's papers on the "Petrie Collections of Egyptian Antiquities."

of Khu-en-Aten once stood, is a long line of mounds, now called by the Egyptians "Tel-el-Amarna."

Some two years ago, a party of natives working under the direction of an English antiquary (Mr. Petrie), backed up by Mr. Jesse Haworth (a Manchester merchant) and other gentlemen interested in the relics of a mighty past, disinterred from these mounds "a number of clay tablets, covered with characters the like of which had not previously been seen in the land of Egypt."

These clay tablets have been deciphered by Prof. Sayce, and the characters inscribed upon them have been determined by him as Babylonian, written, as he says, "about 1430 B.C., or about a hundred years earlier than the date assigned by Egyptologists to the Exodus."

It turns out that the tablets are in fact the remains of official letters and diplomatic despatches, and as read by skilled and learned persons, such as the eminent man just named, they open to us a vista of the past that must revolutionize our idea of the world as Moses knew it.

Again quoting Prof. Sayce, "we had hitherto taken it for granted that the world of Moses was narrow and circumscribed, that a knowledge of letters was confined to a few in the cultivated kingdoms of Egypt and Babylonia, and that the populations of Canaan were as illiterate as those of Europe in the Middle Ages. Suddenly the veil had been drawn aside from that ancient world, and we found it much like our own, educated and literary, constantly informed of all that was passing in the countries around it, and enjoying an advantage that we no longer possessed, that of a common medium of literary intercourse."

This "common medium of literary intercourse" was *not* the complicated Egyptian style of Hieroglyphics, which the clerical gentleman, some of whose words we have quoted, declared to be "the only writing with which even Moses himself was at this time acquainted," but the Babylonian, which

must have been a sufficiently difficult one to acquire (it consisted of about six hundred characters, each varying in meaning according to its connection), but of which, as these discoveries have shown, the knowledge was widespread, and throughout the land of Egypt well-nigh universal.

So much for the assertion that the Israelites at the Exodus had no knowledge of writing, except such as the Egyptian Hieroglyphics.

But the discoveries in Lower Egypt have enabled the contradiction to be carried beyond this; for amongst other objects brought back into the light of day was a collection of "broken potsherds, such as might be used for duck and drake by Arab boys beside the Nile."

Of these fragments of pottery, of their fashion, of the characters, the "curious signs," the ALPHABETIC LETTERS which are inscribed upon them, we cannot here speak particularly; though of them Mr. St. Chad Boscawen has said that they "have astonished the scientific world and contributed to solve one of the most important problems in the history of civilization."

Suffice it to say that they are held to have established the fact that in the land of Egypt hundreds of years before the time of Moses a foreign race dwelt, strangers in that land, using their own weights and measures in their trades and employing their own syllabary, which was totally different from that of the Egyptian priests, and from that of the Babylonish statesmen and merchants. It was not Hieroglyphical, it was not Ideagraphic, it was Consonantal. Therefore in the land of Egypt writing by means of letters formed into words, even such as was used by Moses when he wrote his five books, was known and practised long before he lived, and doubtless long after he died.

Little wonder that M. Renan, the great leader of the French school of scepticism, flouts and scouts the testimony of the tablets from Tel-el-Amarna with a bitterness and a

contempt only second to that which he pours on the Word of God.

Tried by that testimony, such theories as those we have been discussing here are as the fat of lambs in the fire, "they consume, into smoke they consume away," and the people of God find that, even as of old, it is not for them to fight for their heritage, for the words and for the promises which have been given to them for a possession; it is theirs in faith to obey and in patience and hope to wait for their God, while the critics knock each other on the head, and the questioners confound each other's theories.

W. H. HUNTER.

WORKERS TOGETHER.

THE believer who is beginning to learn something of the call of God to him to take his place outside the camp with a still rejected Lord finds perhaps no portion of Holy Scripture more deeply interesting than the account of the lives of Abraham and Isaac, of Jacob and Joseph, with which the greater part of the book of Genesis is occupied.

Over seven-and-thirty centuries have rolled away since God said to Abram, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran,¹ "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee." More than eighty generations of mankind have read how Terah took Abram his son, and went forth with them to go into the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran, and dwelt there; and how after Terah had died Abram went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan he came. Yet the story is as fresh and lifelike to-day as though it were of yesterday.

¹ Acts vii. 2.

Our minds go back as we read, and our hearts can enter into the anxiety of Abram in the famine time,¹ as we think of how often we seek for help elsewhere than from our God; and as we see that even in Egypt He is not forsaken so we remember that though we have oftentimes denied our Lord yet He has ever been faithful to His pledged word—yea, He who delivered us from so great a death is He who doth daily deliver.

In spirit too we have stood with Abram as he pleaded for guilty Sodom, where there was one dear to his heart, as our hearts have gone out towards some we loved still in the doomed world.

Anon, we have smitten upon our breasts as we have seen ourselves to be like Lot, in looking towards, if not in going into, the well watered plain where the sinners dwell.

Again we have read of Jacob's wives, and our conscience has made us say, "Like me! I too have sought by my own methods to get what God had not yet given me, and I, like him, have had to learn the bitterness of the fruit of doing my own will; yet, like him, have proved that through it all, as a chosen one of God, He indeed careth for me; and His love has often shamed me from my unbelief.

Again, as with Joseph so with the Christian in the present. It may happen that a time of great trouble from envious brethren and from unjust masters has been succeeded by much blessing from God,—yea, so that he can give seasonable help in a time of greatest need to those who had aforetime persecuted and despised him.

Thus, and in much else, the believer almost unconsciously finds, in the accounts of individual walking before God and with God, as recorded in Genesis, much that answers to his own experience, "according to the analogy of the faith."

How different it all is when we read Exodus! It might have been expected, humanly speaking, that Moses would

¹ Gen. xii. 10.

have given us a *more* vivid picture of home-life when speaking of his own times than when chronicling events that he had never seen. But it is quite otherwise. Indeed, all we read of the first eighty years of his life is contained in ten verses that speak of his childhood, and twelve verses that record an incident that occurred when he was forty years of age; and throughout his writings the very touches of family life which make Genesis so interesting are almost entirely absent from the remainder of the Pentateuch.

In particular, we observe that when God appeared to Moses in the bush it was not that HE should erect there an altar to Jehovah, as Abram had done, as Isaac had done, as Jacob had done.¹

Each of these had a definite responsibility towards God, as to worshipping Him individually and with the family which He had given them.

But here quite a new thought is brought in—a fresh revelation of the purpose of God is about to be made, a new leaf is to be turned over in His dealings with the chosen seed.

Moses had a wife and a son with him, and might have expected instructions as to their family worship, but the word from God was quite different: “I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt. . . . When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt YE shall serve God upon this mountain.”

Moses might have begun arguing, “Lord, why can I not serve Thee here now? I live a godly, consistent life; or I will fetch my wife and son, and WE will serve Thee as a family in any way that Thou mayest direct, and surely that will please Thee, as it did when my forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, did so.”

But no; God had a purpose to fulfil, and Moses alone

¹ Gen. xii. 8, xxvi. 25, xxxv.

could not carry out His will. No, not even Moses out of Egypt, in the wilderness. For work or service of any kind that God means to be shared by several cannot be done by one and yet done to please Him.

It was necessary, it was imperatively necessary, that Moses should first go into Egypt and bring out a people into the wilderness, ere the purpose of God could be carried out. For God's word was not "Thou shalt serve," but "YE shall serve." And as we read on further in this book of Exodus we learn that part of God's will was that a number of willing-hearted should bring materials that a number of wise-hearted might make therefrom a sanctuary. Yea, He said to Moses, "Let THEM make Me a sanctuary."

It is this thought of collective action that gives the key to the book of Exodus. While Genesis has to do with God dealing with His servants as individuals, that as such they may please Him, Exodus is rather concerned with the way in which He acts towards companies of His own; of such as He having brought out, disciplines that they may work TOGETHER for the accomplishment of His purposes, each bringing his own offering and each doing his own work, yet co-ordinated by the great Master of Assemblies, so as that a result is brought about by all together, that no one singly could accomplish, however devout or however earnest he might be.

If this be seen and the book of Exodus be then studied in the spirit of seeking to learn therefrom how we may be God's WORKERS TOGETHER, we shall find it as interesting and as pregnant with practical help and instruction as the book of Genesis.

C. M. LUXMOORE.

Fragments.

OUR God has no lower standard for His children than "Walk in the Spirit"; and if our walk is not with Him through the week, it is more than likely that the Lord's-day morning will find us in the same condition, and our burdened conscience will find relief in the confession of failure, rather than in the expression of praise and thanksgiving.

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Thus often in the assemblies of saints poverty is painfully realized by those within, and even more so at times by those without, and while the offerings of praise and thanksgiving Godward are restrained, the blessings from God are withheld likewise (see Matt. iii. 10 ; Heb. xiii. 15).

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In order to real spiritual blessing there must be self-judgment on the part of gathered saints, and this prior to our coming together. Then, and only then, will the Spirit of God find our hearts so tuned that praise and thanksgiving can be rendered aright.

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Nor let it be thought that this applies only to those who are gifted audibly to lead the saints in assembly. Let us remember that such should be but the mouthpiece of the whole and the expression of that praise which ought to be universal.

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If it were so we should see such a result as was witnessed in the House of God in the kingdom past (2 Chron. v. 13): one note of praise going Godward, then the blessing descending upon Israel. For the present house and kingdom the purposes of God are unchanged—"Whose house are ye."

Other Lands.

NOTES FROM ITALY.

THE following extracts are taken from a letter by our brother J. S. Anderson, from Florence, under date Sept. 4, 1889.¹

“The sects here are very ‘liberal,’ so much so that those in them will do anything but the right thing—come out. . . . To some the testimony is being blessed, and there are some dear young Italians, intelligent and holy young brethren, who are taking a truly dignified and humble stand for Christ as Lord. This is a great source of comfort to me, for the strain on one’s spirit and mind by continued opposition is very great.

“It is a Satanic snare to suppose that faithfulness to God’s truth weakens or limits evangelistic testimony. It purifies, it sanctifies it, separating it from human inventions, but it deepens spiritual life, and quickens zeal and love.

“Let me give you a few notes on the Lord’s work in Italy:—

“Ambrosini and Carralini, the two young printers, are helpful in the Gospel in Florence, and occasionally visit other places. They are very faithful to the whole truth as revealed to them, and their testimony is being blessed to some of those older in the faith.

“With the help of these two brethren, I have four Gospel meetings in houses situated at the four ‘gates’ of Florence, *i.e.* N., S., E. and W. These are centres of familiar and free declaration of the Gospel in all its aspects.

“During July I held public meetings, taking up the Prophets (sadly neglected in Italy), and during September I am to speak on the Prophets after the Captivity. On other days of the week I labour in the Gospel as the Lord directs.”

UNITED STATES AND CANADA.

LETTER FROM MR. T. W. D. MUIR.

“DETROIT, MICH., U. S. A.,

“Nov. 9th., 1889.

“Dear brethren in Christ,—

“After a safe, and, on the whole, quiet passage from Liverpool, my wife and I arrived safely in New York, being 8½ days from shore to shore. We went the same day to Philadelphia, where for a week and a half we enjoyed the fellowship of the saints who there gather in the Name of the Lord. We then passed on to Hamilton,

¹ Would have been inserted in October number had space permitted.

Canada, where we spent a few days, and, with a few more calls on little assemblies of the Lord's dear people, we came here.

"I am glad to be back again in America, for while in Britain I prayed for the work *there*, yet my heart really was *here*, where the need is so much greater. Oh that we may have the needed grace and godly energy to go in for more real work for God than ever. Often I think I am but playing at the thing, and can but cry to God to stamp the realities of eternity more deeply on my soul. No doubt what is needed is to abide more in the sanctuary, and then we will see and estimate things in God's own light, where the apparent prosperity of the wicked is seen to be but a passing dream,—an image to be despised when God awakes, when their end will be destruction (Ps. lxxiii.).

"As it is with you in England, there is here much '*religion*.' The evidence of Jeroboam being at work is everywhere to be seen,—especially in settled communities. Churches—in many instances grand edifices—are to be found wherever money can be got to build them. It is true, many of the people—especially in the United States—don't trouble themselves about attending them, but it is looked upon as a *good* thing, from a business point of view, to help and encourage them.

"A village without a 'place of worship' is considered as lacking in enterprise. I knew in one instance an infidel doctor and a tavern-keeper, who were the chief promoters of a scheme, ultimately successful, in the building of a chapel, to uphold the credit of the place!

"Of course, concerts, bazaars, shadow sales, etc., etc., were all gone in for, to raise the necessary money to meet the building expenses.

"In older districts they may have more '*refined*' ways of accomplishing such things, but the same principle obtains in all. You can imagine how much Gospel men under such auspices will give out in such places. The fact is, that in going in and out among the people you find many of them as utterly ignorant of God's salvation as if they were Hottentots. And, as a brother who has laboured much in this country remarked: The Americans are *indifferent*; they don't care whether you preach one God or twenty. Consequently, it is not so much *opposition* as *indifference* one contends with.

"Now, when one thinks that in the United States alone there are over sixty millions of souls, all speaking the English tongue, and the greater part of them living and dying in utter ignorance of God's Gospel, both in the letter and power of it, it makes the heart ache to think of the many of God's saints who, we fear, are hiding their talent in the earth, instead of using it for their Lord, while millions are going on to hell!

"To men sent of God He always opens up doors. And while there may be, and there is, much to *discourage*, there is also much to make

one praise the Lord, and take courage for fresh efforts in His service. Our God has been very good in sending over here from the Old Country servants who have faithfully plodded on, preaching the Gospel—sometimes to very small companies—and teaching the saints ‘to observe all things, whatsoever He commanded.’

“More of such are needed, both in Canada and the United States; and our prayer is that God may raise up and send forth such fitted by God, and filled with the Holy Spirit, to preach, not merely clear doctrine, but the Gospel in “power, in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance” (1 Thess. i. 5).

“There are thousands of villages, towns and cities that have never been touched by the simple Gospel of God’s grace, and in which there is not an assembly gathered to His Name. So that those who care not to ‘build on another man’s foundation’ will find plenty of room for the exercise of their gift, and a full measure of service. We shall value the prayers of our fellow-saints then, that the God of all grace may strengthen for His own service those who are in the field, and may fit and thrust forth many more to do His work in preaching the Gospel, and helping His people in this needy, needy section of the vineyard.

“With Christian regards to you, and all who love the Lord in incorruption,

“I am, your brother,

“THOMAS D. W. MUIR.”

Department of Question and Answer.

“If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God.”—*John vii. 17, R. V.*

QUESTION 12.—*Is the Baptism which is mentioned in Galatians iii. 27 water baptism or the Spirit’s baptism in which we are baptized into the one Body.*

Strictly speaking there is no such thing as the Spirit’s baptism; that is, that the Spirit is never the baptizer—Christ is the baptizer, according to the prophecy of John the Baptist; see also 1 Corinthians xii. 13: “In one Spirit ye were all baptized into one Body, whether Jew or Greek,” etc. See R. V. Now this Spirit baptism is intimately connected with the Body aspect of the Church, and in Galatians iii. 27 the baptism there spoken of seems also connected with the same line of thought: verse 28, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, bond or free, male or female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” This evidently refers to the Body aspect of the Church, not the assembly or church of God

aspect, where authority and rule come in. Through not clearly appreciating this distinction sad confusion has arisen amongst professedly gathered saints. In the churches of God we have servant and master, male and female. Lose sight of this fact, and insubjection, mere democracy and even immorality will be the result.

J. A. B.

QUESTION 13.—*Will you kindly explain 1 Peter iv. 6 and 1 Peter iii. 19?*

1 Peter iv. 6. "Them that are dead," or literally "dead ones," appear to be those of former dispensations to whom "message of good" came from God (the term "the gospel" employed in the English version far exceeds the strength of the original). Such a message came to Abel (Heb. xi. 4), to Abraham (Gal. iii. 8), to Israel in the wilderness (Heb. iv. 2), and to all others to whom revelation was given, even though darkly, of life through death, of sacrifice for the sinner, and of offering for sin, through which God was able, in anticipation of the death of His Son, to deliver from eternal destruction those who obeyed His voice. Hence such will come forth (perhaps in numbers we little dream of) out of their graves to a resurrection of life (John v. 29), though the Judge of living and dead will enter into judgment with them (as He will with His own of the present day) concerning deeds done by them as men in the flesh.

1 Peter iii. 19. The word should be read as in R. V. "in which," not "by which," and chapter i. 11 makes the meaning perfectly clear. It was the Spirit of Christ that testified in the prophets; and in that Spirit, upon the earth, through the first preacher of righteousness, God the Son sought in longsuffering compassion to turn some from the wickedness that was great upon the earth, during the time the ark was being constructed.

W. H. H.

QUESTION 14.—*Is there a difference of meaning between the terms "children of God," and "sons of God," as used in the New Testament?*

In this as in much else the distinction between (1) the believer's place and standing "in Christ," and (2) his place as a responsible individual walking in obedience or disobedience must be kept before the mind.

As to (1) the apostle writing to the Galatians, having (iii. 7) declared that they who are "out of faith" (*i.e.*, all believers) "are sons of Abraham,"¹ adds the greater declaration that all are "sons of God IN CHRIST JESUS through the faith, FOR as many as into Christ were baptized, put on Christ," and in Christ Jesus there is no distinction, all

¹ Revised Version. The words "children" and "sons" are mixed up in almost inextricable confusion in the Authorized Version.

are one, and one in a unity which goes beyond even that of the church of God; for it not only knows no difference between Jew and Gentile, or bond and free, but between male and female (iii. 26-28), which is not the case in the assembly; the reason being that the baptism "into Christ" is "into one Body" (1 Cor. xii. 13). Hence in this individuality is lost, is sunk in the great fact of membership. In this sense, therefore, "there is no difference"; all are "children of God," all are "sons of God."

As to (2) it is far otherwise. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (1 John v. 1), and of all believers it is written "now are we children of God" (1 John iii. 2), and the Spirit wherewith we were sealed when we believed (Eph. i. 13) witnesses together with our spirit to this (Rom. viii. 16). The matter is one of RELATIONSHIP, a relationship of which God alone is the author and the occasion: "of His own will begat He us, with the word of truth" (Jas. i. 18), and which is altogether unalterable, unaffected by circumstances or by conduct. To this Romans viii. 14 appears in sharp contrast: "*As many as are led*" (or guided) "*by the Spirit of God they are SONS OF GOD.*" Will it be asserted by any that every child of God is guided by the Spirit of God? The guidance of that Spirit is "into all the truth" (John xvi. 13), and how many of God's children there are whose knowledge of the truth is, to say the least of it, sadly limited! Those who are guided by their feelings, by their traditions, by their fellow-men, or *not* guided by the Spirit of God,—do they thereby lose their place in God's family, do they cease to be God's children? By no means; but they fail to exhibit likeness to their Father; they are not, in this sense, "sons of God," as the matter is now one, not of relationship, but of LIKENESS. With this agree Matthew v. 45, where the Lord sets out a certain course of conduct following which the children of God will "become" (so the Greek) "sons" of their Father; and Luke vi. 35, where He promises that through obedience to a similar precept their "reward shall be great," and they "shall be the sons of the Most High," whose children they are acknowledged to be in the following words.

Without the distinction which we assert here, these two verses are self-contradictory and meaningless; with it, they are full of light; and this of itself shows that there is difference between the terms, and that it must be made if we would rightly divide the Word of truth.

W. H. H.

QUESTION 15.—*Is there anything in the Scriptures, in the way either of precept or of example, indicating that we shall know one another in our glorified bodies?*

Yes! both precept and example. As to precept, see Luke xvi. 9 and 1 Thessalonians ii. 19. As to example, see Matthew xvii. 3 and Luke

xvi. 23. Of course, since none have yet received their glorified bodies, these "example scriptures" only obtain, in this matter, according to the analogy of the faith, as expressed in 1 Corinth. xiii. 10 and Hebrews xii. 23, last clause. For since recognition is so complete in the unperfected state, how much keener will it be in the perfected state!

J. B.

QUESTION 16.—*Will all the living saints be taken when the Lord comes to the air? Or, will the watching ones only be taken and the others be left to be tried?—Heb. ix. 28.*

Hebrews ix. 28 is a common scripture in the hands of such as assert that unwatchful, unfaithful saints or believers will be left still upon the earth, for purification or such like, at the moment when "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, . . . and the *dead* IN CHRIST shall rise, first, and we who are" (IN CHRIST) "ALIVE and REMAIN shall be caught up together with them in clouds to meet the Lord in the air."

These words of 1 Thessalonians iv. 12-18 most plainly show that being IN CHRIST is the one essential to and qualification for being caught up together. Therefore, all in Him, yea, because in Him, shall be caught up together. Concerning whom the witness is true—

"Once in Christ, in Christ for ever :
Thus the eternal covenant stands."

The supposed contradiction of Hebrews ix. 28 is quite removed by the more correct rendering, which reads: "So Christ, having been once" (for all) "offered to bear the sins of the many, a second time, apart from sin, shall appear to those waiting for Him unto salvation."

J. B.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF ASSEMBLIES.

THE HOUSE, THE CITY, AND THE PROVINCE.

IN order to attain to or communicate a right knowledge of needed or neglected truth, three things are usually found to be necessary: the first is a distinct perception of the doctrine or fact in question, the next a review of the evidence by which it is proved, and the last the discovery of the scriptural formula by which it is expressed—such formula being the word or set of words which the Holy Spirit has chosen as fittest both to convey the truth and to help the memory and understanding of the Lord's people.

Need we add that, in the present day, we have the written Word of God as the *only* standard of doctrine, the *only* reliable record of testimony, and the *only* "guide to correct phraseology" in speaking of revealed truth?

We entreat the reader not to undervalue "correct phraseology." It is not the reverent study of the Scriptures that will lead him to do so. They have come down to us marvellous in their accurate language, in their exact and discriminating choice of words. We have to "hold fast the FORM" of these "sound words." It is our own fault or our own folly if we require any other.

Indeed, indeed, the speech of those who depart from God's testimonies soon bewrays them. The necessities of the cause of error force them to invent phrases and watch-words unknown to the Scriptures of truth. Would that our ears were trained to detect the difference!

The foregoing remarks have been suggested by recent correspondence concerning an important truth, new to many, which may be briefly stated thus:—

That, according to the model of church-government left us in the Word of God, all those who, in the same town or city, continued steadfastly in "the fellowship" (Acts ii. 42) formed **THE ASSEMBLY** in that place, and were only considered as **ONE** assembly, however large the city, or however numerous the disciples. That this one assembly might be, and often was, subdivided into local gatherings, meeting habitually, for worship and ministry, at different houses. That the assembly in the city formed part of a well-recognised circle of fellowship known as "the assemblies" of the province or district in which it lay.

These things have already been taught, and the evidence thereof produced, in these pages.¹ Let us pass at once to the "form of sound words" in which they may be uttered *by* us, having been so, and not otherwise, uttered *for* us by the holy apostles and prophets in the beginning of the dispensation.

Firstly, then, the Holy Spirit always speaks of the assembly in any given city in the singular number. Thus we read: "**THE CHURCH** which [was] **IN JERUSALEM**" (Acts viii. 1; xi. 22); "**IN ANTIOCH** at **THE CHURCH** which was [there]" (Acts xiii. 1); "**THE CHURCH** **IN CENCHREA**" (Rom. xvi. 1); "**THE CHURCH** **OF GOD** which is **IN CORINTH**" (1 Cor. i. 2; 2 Cor. i. 1); "**THE CHURCH** **IN EPHESUS**" (Rev. ii. 1, R.V.)—" **IN SMYRNA**" (Rev. ii. 8, R.V.)—" **IN PERGAMOS**" (Rev. ii. 12)—" **IN THYATIRA**" (Rev. ii. 18)—" **IN SARDIS**" (Rev. iii. 1)—" **IN PHILADELPHIA**" (Rev. iii. 7)—" **IN LAODICEA**" (Rev. iii. 14, R.V.). Hence, when we set aside the "at" of the Authorized Version as an incorrect translation, and follow the Revised Version, which again follows all the best editors, in its reading of Revelation ii. 1, 8, and iii. 14, we conclude that the usual scriptural formula to describe all those who, in the same city, have been gathered into the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ is "**THE ASSEMBLY** **IN** (*ἐν*—*en*) that city."

¹ *Needed Truth*, Vol. II., pp. 28-40, 49-76.

Another formula, in no way contradictory, is: "THE CHURCH OF LAODICEANS" (Col. iv. 16); or "THE CHURCH OF THESSALONIANS" (1 Thess. i. 1; 2 Thess. i. 1); just as we might (leaving out the article, which is misleading) say, "the assembly of Parisians," meaning the assembly in Paris. But we do not read anywhere of *the assemblies* in a city, or of *the assemblies* of its citizens.

Secondly, the circle of district fellowship is described as THE ASSEMBLIES OF (OR IN) the said district. Thus we have: "THE CHURCHES OF GALATIA" (1 Cor. xvi. 1; Gal. i. 2); "THE CHURCHES OF ASIA" (1 Cor. xvi. 19); "THE CHURCHES OF MACEDONIA" (2 Cor. viii. 1); "THE CHURCHES OF JUDÆA which [are] in Christ" (Gal. i. 22); "THE CHURCHES OF GOD which are IN JUDÆA in Christ Jesus" (1 Thess. ii. 14); "THE SEVEN CHURCHES which [are] IN ASIA" (Rev. i. 4). Here again there is no confusion in the language employed. We never read of *the assembly of* a province. It has already been noticed that when there was joint action on the part of the assemblies of a province the brethren are referred to, not by the names of their cities, but by the name of their province. Paul writes "Achaia" and not "Corinth" or "Cenchrea." He writes "Macedonia" and "Macedonians," instead of "Philippi" or "Thessalonians" (Rom. xv. 26; 2 Cor. ix. 2).

Thirdly, when allusion is made to a company of gathered saints meeting at a particular address in the city wherein they dwelt, a totally different expression is used. They are the assembly AT the house (κατ' οἴκον—kat' oikon) of such an one. Thus we hear of: "Prisca and Aquila (R.V.) . . . and THE CHURCH AT THEIR HOUSE" (Rom. xvi. 5); "Aquila and Prisca (R.V.) . . . with THE CHURCH AT THEIR HOUSE (1 Cor. xvi. 19); "Nymphas (or Nympha) and THE CHURCH AT THEIR (OR HER) HOUSE" (Col. iv. 15); "THE CHURCH AT THY HOUSE" (To Philemon verse 2). There is not a single occurrence of the assembly *in the house* (ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ—en tō oikō) of any one. Possibly, if the whole assembly had met in one

house it might have been so written. As it is, IN (ἐν—en) is used only of all in the fellowship in one city. These four last-mentioned cases merit a more detailed treatment.

The salutation in 1 Corinthians xvi. 19 was sent from Ephesus, where Paul wrote his first letter to the assembly of God in Corinth.¹ At that time "the church at Aquila's" (ver. 19) did not include "all the brethren" (ver. 20) in the fellowship in Ephesus. Others, then, must have been meeting elsewhere. Nevertheless, all together are called THE ASSEMBLY IN EPHEBUS (*cf.* Acts xx. 17; Rev. ii. 1, R.V.), and never "the assemblies" in or of Ephesus.

We gather from Colossians iv. 15, 16 that, although "Nymphas' house" was in Laodicea, the "church at Nymphas' house" was only a part of the "church of Laodiceans." Yet THE ASSEMBLY IN LAODICEA (Rev. iii. 14, R.V.), or OF LAODICEANS was one assembly, not several.

"Philemon's house" was in Colosse. So much is evident from Colossians iv. 9. The inference is surely direct that if "the church at Philemon's" had been "the assembly in Colosse" *it would have been called so.*

Romans xvi. contains ample proof that "the church at Aquila's" was not the only assembly in the place to which that chapter is addressed. "The brethren with them" (ver. 14) and "all the saints with them" (ver. 15) indicate distinct groups. There are, besides, many names in the chapter which are neither in these groups nor in the "church at Aquila's." The tent-maker Aquila, being obliged by his occupation to secure a dwelling with roomy apartments, might well put one of them at the disposition of the brethren inhabiting the same quarter with himself. Analogy not only warrants, but requires, the conclusion that this and all the other groups in the city formed the assembly of God therein.

If we turn back from the records concerning the outlying

¹ See *Needed Truth*, No. 5, p. 47.

assemblies to the history of the church in Jerusalem, the evidence becomes overwhelming. About 3,000 souls were already added there on the Day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 41). Not long afterwards the number of the males (*ἀνδρῶν*—*andrōn*) came to be about 5,000 (Acts iv. 4). Later still, there were many myriads (*μυριάδες*—*muriades*, tens of thousands) of believers among the Jews (Acts xxi. 20). They were so far from acquiring public buildings capable of containing such a multitude that as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them for distribution to each, according as any one had need (Acts iv. 34, 35). And if any reader should still think it possible that these myriads congregated for worship and ministry under one roof or within one enclosure, let him look at Acts ii. 46 and v. 42, where the mass meetings in the outer temple (*ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ*—*en tō hierō*) are contrasted with the local gatherings held, here as elsewhere, “at home” (R.V.), or, “at [the] houses” (*κατ’ οἶκον*—*kat’ oikon*). There may have been ever so many houses, each with its little meeting having its local responsibilities; none the less there was unity for all in the city. There was **THE ASSEMBLY**, the [one] **IN JERUSALEM**. And when the occasion called for it, as in Acts vi. and xv., “the whole assembly” could, and did, taken common action as such.

Acts ix. 31 calls for a passing remark, as it has been quoted in order to destroy the force of the argument based on the title “the assembly” when applied to all the disciples in a city. Doubtless the true reading is that of the Revised Version: “So the church (not ‘churches’) throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified; and . . . was multiplied.” Again note the accuracy of Scripture. It is not the church “in” or “of” Judæa, etc.,—which would have been confusion—but the church **THROUGHOUT** the whole of these countries. Acts viii. 1 informs us what assembly this was, and how it came to be spread over so wide a surface: “And there arose in that

day a great persecution against THE CHURCH which [was] IN JERUSALEM ; and they were all scattered abroad THROUGHOUT the regions of Judæa and Samaria, except the apostles." The unity of the metropolitan church was maintained in spite of the dispersion. How it was maintained has already been indicated in these pages.

Likely enough the wording of Acts ix. 31 was changed by the copyists, in order to bring it into conformity with Acts xvi. 5: "So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily." In the latter passage the plural is as clearly fitting as it seems out of place in the former. "The Scripture cannot be broken ;" neither here, nor anywhere."

THE ASSEMBLY AT THE HOUSE, with its group of disciples coming together for the Breaking of the Bread, for teaching, and for prayer. THE ASSEMBLY IN THE CITY, securing the dwelling together in unity of all the brethren within its walls, and, in case of need, their acting together as one man. THE ASSEMBLIES OF THE PROVINCE, knowing, helping, and taking counsel with one another. Such was the order of church-fellowship in apostolic times. Alas! how we have failed to reproduce it in these remnant days of ours!

"The assemblies of the county of A——." "The assembly in the city of B——." To what known and acknowledged circles of fellowship among us could these words be made to apply? Where should a letter addressed to either be delivered? "The assembly at the meeting-house, C—— Street," we do know. Mayhap also we know its origin. A few restless spirits, to whom the rule and order at X—— Hall proved irksome, seceded and set up a meeting a few streets off. They neither asked nor wished for fellowship at the beginning of their assembly existence, but, once begun, they expect, as a matter of course, that their letters of commendation will be received, and their acts of discipline respected, by the churches of God throughout

the world. It is easier to sneer at other brethren who are supposed to "beg leave before they can meet in a new place" than to explain by what right men who repudiate all fellowship when they are about to found a meeting can, when they choose, force themselves and their doings upon the assemblies they have ignored.

It is easy also to affirm that a return to scriptural principles would involve us in evils we all desire to avoid. But it is only honest to admit that our present practices are opposed to scriptural precedent, and cannot be described in scriptural language.

A. P. MACDONALD.

WITHIN AND WITHOUT.

IN seeking to attain to a right understanding of the mind of our God concerning any portion of His revealed will, we believe it will ever be both safe and helpful to consider the subject first in its widest aspect: "That which is revealed belongeth to us and our children";¹ and while in the wisdom of God it is hidden from the wise and prudent ones of earth, it is revealed to the spiritual babes, who, if led of the Spirit, will be enabled to search into the deep things of God. The whole Word in its entirety is intended for our present state of being; when with the Lord it will be no longer needed. It is the revelation of One who is absent to those who would obey Him.

Moreover, in comparing spiritual things with spiritual, and in making all Scripture our study, all being profitable,² we must remember that God has for us a higher object than the mere attainment of knowledge. Knowledge to be to profit must be attained in fellowship with Himself; without this it becomes akin to that which Satan promised to Eve: and he will not object to our being as gods, knowing good and evil, so long as this knowledge only renders us, as it did him, the better able to hinder the divine purposes.

But let it not be thought for a moment that in thus speaking we favour the idea of hyper-spirituality claimed by some, who, setting aside the revealed will of God, profess to be led by some higher thing, which is, after all, too often but the satisfying of their own will.

Again, in coming to a right understanding of the Truth, there will ever be a proportionately increased acquaintance with Him who is in Himself the Way, and the Truth, and the Life, and thus a moulding and conforming to the image

¹ Deut. xxix. 29.

² 2 Tim. iii. 16.

of Him who created us and whose purpose with us and for us is that we may shine for Him in a crooked and perverse generation.

This will explain why our attainment in divine things often seems so slow. Is it not that our Lord's desire for us is an ever-increasing acquaintance with Himself as a living, personal Saviour? There may be the most enjoyable fellowship with but slowly increasing knowledge; while, on the other hand, there may be much knowledge attained to through the letter of the Word without an increased acquaintance with the living Christ—a knowledge which can be as rapidly lost as acquired, leaving the soul in greater darkness of understanding than before. A child may be in the enjoyment of the daily care and love of its parent and yet grow but slowly in the knowledge of his will. Much as were the disciples in the company of their Master, it was only little by little He unfolded to them His purposes. If there be in us the readiness to do, there will be a corresponding growth in divine things, instead of the decrepitude of a spiritual old age, which ever points but too clearly to the decline of divine life and energy in the soul.

Having said thus much, let us proceed to consider the subject that is before us.

The Cross stands forth as the great centre where the mighty work of redemption was wrought out. To it the types and shadows of the Old Testament point as the place where sin was to be dealt with to God's satisfaction, while the pages of the New Testament point back to it as the place where peace has been made.

Yet, while the types and shadows that speak of atonement had their fulfilment at the Cross, there are other purposes of God, be it remembered, that through the Cross are yet to be accomplished, and are now being accomplished.

“The redemption of the soul is precious (that is, costly),

and ceaseth for ever."¹ But with these redeemed ones, yea, and with a redeemed creation, God has yet more fully to work out His own will, subduing all things unto Himself. The Lord Jesus is not only the One who loved the Church and gave Himself for it, but is also the One who has purchased the kingdoms of the earth and will yet take to Himself His great power and reign.²

So far then from the truths of the kingdom being accomplished at the Cross, there they were intensified, and through them salvation will yet flow out in its fullest sense to a groaning creation.³

But what, some may ask, has this to do with the subject? Much every way, we reply; for from not having a clear conception of these things arises much of the present confusion of thought among saints professedly gathered together unto the Name of the Lord Jesus.

Let it be once clearly grasped as a fact that the kingdom has not ceased during this present age, but only that its sphere has for a time become limited through Israel's rejection of their Messiah, and we shall see that kingdom truth and principles are still binding upon us, if obedient children in this present age; the aspect of the kingdom into which we have been brought being that contained in Colossians i. 13 and Revelation i. 9, etc. We cannot attempt in our contracted space to meet all the various arguments either of those who would seek to gather Christians into church position "on the ground of the One Body," or of those who teach (what seems almost identical) the gathering of Christians to break bread because they are Christians. The one as well as the other we believe to be unscriptural; and although those teaching and practising these principles may be in outward opposition to one another, their work will end in the same results—the gathering in a number of those

¹ Ps. xlix. 8.

² Rev. xi. 17.

³ Rom. viii. 21.

that God has not first delivered as repentant ones and gathered out in heart to Himself.

It was the putting of position before condition that proved disastrous to Israel, and is, we fear, bringing disaster upon the present testimony of those professedly gathered in the Name of the Lord. Owing partly to the difficulty of dealing with those within who have never been broken down in their wills, a line of teaching and action has been followed in which we recognise that which is but a human device to meet the difficulties of an unscriptural mode of gathering, whether it be in that commonly known as "Exclusivism," which seems like an attempt to crush into that which may be in measure a divine mould materials which lack the plastic condition only existing in a child of God who has experienced when without, prior to being gathered in, the deliverance spoken of in 2 Timothy ii. 26, or whether it be the effort to reconvert the gathered-in ones, whom, alas! too late, have been found not to have been gathered-out ones, and had not ceased to do evil before learning to do well.

But we purpose now to look at that line of teaching which refuses to deal with sin in an assembly to the exclusion of the sinning one from the fellowship and company of such when gathering for the Breaking of Bread. The argument of such is, that as it is the Lord's table and not ours, He only can put away, and has not given authority to others to do so: that creatures who are themselves liable to failure and mistake could never be called on to carry out the judgment of their Lord on fellow saints.

First, let us notice that God works in nature by natural laws (as they are called):—

"Fire, and hail; snow, and vapours;
Stormy wind fulfilling His word."¹

¹ Ps. cxlviii. 8.

Those very elements are capable of working either blessing or ruin: blessing where He wills,¹ or ruin where Satan is allowed to use them to work his purposes, as when the wind from the desert smote the house in which Job's children were feasting.

Yet again, in the Garden of Eden, when God drove man out, He placèd cherubim at the entrance to the garden, to keep the way of the tree of life; yet cherubim were created beings, capable of sinning and falling from their high position, for we see Satan himself was once an anointed cherub.² Therefore the solemn warning to those who take a place of rule in the midst of God's gathered saints, lest they in like manner fall.³

Angels also execute God's judgments; they have done so in the past, and are yet to do so.⁴ Yet angels can fall and misuse the power given to them.⁵

Let us now, as we proceed, keep clearly before our minds two thoughts which we seek to set forth in these pages: first, that God has used, is using, and will use, to accomplish His divine purposes, instruments which are themselves capable of falling, or which, when coming under the power of evil, may be used to the frustration of His will; secondly, that there has been in the past, is to-day, and will be in the succeeding ages, a within and a without.

Adam and Eve were in Eden, and when they sinned they were driven out—out from that holy spot, where they had walked with their Creator, that place which, we believe, shadowed out on earth things heavenly.

From this point on to the calling out of Egypt of God's

¹ Song of Songs iv. 16. ² Ezek. xxviii. 14. ³ 1 Tim. iii. 6.

⁴ See the plague on Israel (2 Sam. xxiv. 17; Matt. xiii. 41), and the book of Revelation, wherein they are frequently set forth as accomplishing the judgments of God.

⁵ Jude 6. See also the last struggle as depicted in Revelation xii.

people Israel we have no collective worship or divine centre to which a nation or people were gathered on earth; sacrifice and altars we have, and individual worship, or that of a family, but when God delivered His people *out* He gathered them into divine order¹; and again we have a within and a without. The leprous man was to be put outside the camp; and when sin came in through the very man who had been in part the instrument raised up of God and used for deliverance out of Egypt, we find judgment executed within by those who were themselves capable of failure.²

Turning now to the eldership of the New Testament, in the main we believe it agrees with that of the Old, but with at least one marked difference—life or death of the body not being directly placed in the hands of the eldership or oversight in this present aspect of the kingdom as it was in the past. Be it plainly understood, then, that the elders of the kingdom past exercised power and authority within.³ Yet these elders of the people were but failing men, identified often with the sins of the people, as in the day's of Israel's apostasy,⁴ where there was complete failure on the part of the leaders of the people.

Yet, again, in the end of this age, at the setting up of the millennial kingdom, we have the gathering out of His kingdom, and the casting into outer darkness, as before referred to.

And in the closing scene of the book of Revelation⁵ we have the blessed and glorious within, and the terrible without, where are the dogs, the teachers and holders of false doctrine,⁶ in company with the filthy and the abominable, murderers and liars. Thus closes the book with the solemn

¹ Num. ix. 23.

² Exod. xxxii. 28.

³ See the case of the manslayer (Deut. xix. 12, and xxi. 19), and many other cases which will occur to the memory.

⁴ Jer. v. 5.

⁵ Rev. xxii. 14, 15.

⁶ Phil. iii. 2.

within and without, which we have traced throughout its pages.

It now remains for us to notice that, as there has been in the kingdom past, and will be in the kingdom to come, a divine circle, within which the judgment of God is carried out by creatures in themselves failing and imperfect, so likewise in the kingdom present there is still a within and a without, and the within is the circle where, in accordance with what we have already noticed, the will of God, or the rule of God, is carried out by those capable of failure.

First, let us turn to Matthew xviii. 18, and here, be it remembered, that, as also in chapter xvi., the Lord is pre-figuring the present aspect of divine authority and rule on earth which was to succeed to that age fast passing away, at the end of which He was to suffer and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.¹

It is little wonder that, in a large pamphlet that has come under our notice, in which the writer labours to prove that there is no scriptural authority for putting outside of an assembly for false doctrine, nor even for moral transgression in the present condition of churches, these portions of the Word of God are passed over in silence.

Will any one tell us that as a heathen man and a publican we can yet meet with such around that which professes to be the table of the Lord? If so, then why not with any publican or sinner who may desire, as in the various sects around, to add this mode of worship to his other idolatries?² But if this be the length to which some would go, we do not suppose that many of those professedly gathered out would be willing to follow. Nay, we believe there would be in every godly soul a shrinking back with horror from such a godless association, remembering the words of Scripture, "Holiness becometh thine

¹ Heb. ix. 26.

² 2 Kings xvii. 28-33.

house for ever." This would be indeed to make it a den of thieves.

Notice that in chapter xviii., verse 15, the words "against thee," are somewhat doubtful,¹ but as the text stands it would appear that any sin persisted in would in the last resort have to be dealt with by the church to the expulsion of the sinning one, and with this the words of Titus iii. 10 agree.

Moreover, the final dealing is in the hands of the CHURCH, not in those of apostles, nor even of elders, so that the argument that because apostles have passed away the power to purge out the evil, or to purge ourselves out from it, has ceased, falls to the ground. So with the binding and loosing in verse 18: it is not connected with apostolic power as in chapter xvi. 19, but is spoken to the two or three gathered together unto the Name of the Lord, they thus having the authority to carry out in the kingdom on earth the will of their Lord in heaven; the binding not being their act first on earth to be ratified in heaven, but their carrying out of the will of the Lord, as directly made known to them by revelation in those days, or as now made known to us through the written Word.

Let us also notice that the contention of some that the Lord, as Head over God's house, has alone the right to deal with those within in judgment, or to put any of them without, is also completely answered by the scriptures we have already considered, in which we find our God continually using imperfect instruments to do His will.

The argument seems indeed a weak one that the servant has no power to hinder his fellow-servant from stealing his master's property, because it is not his (the servant's) house; if this be so, why should the porter be called to watch that his *master's* house be not broken up, or why the

¹ They are not found in the Sinaitic or Vatican MSS.

warning to the elders of the church of Ephesus¹ to watch?

With regard to making a difference between doctrinal and moral evil, and looking on the former as of less importance than the latter, as one has remarked, the very foundation of the church is laid with a doctrine,² and if it were possible for men or demons to touch that foundation, the whole fabric of the church would be shaken. No wonder, then, that we are told not to receive into our house or bid God-speed to the holders of false doctrines lest we be partakers of their evil deeds.³ Yet, strange to say, we are now told we must permit such to take their place at that professing to be the Lord's table, although they would rob Him of His glory,—spiritual thieves in heavenly things,—and this because the Lord is alone able to put out from the assembly!

Passing on to the book of Acts, we notice that the very one to whom the keys of the kingdom were given, and who opens it to both Jew and Gentile, the man who speaks of himself as an "elder," and the one also to whom the Lord gives authority (as see John xxi. 16), was, after all, but a failing man, and one whom Paul had to withstand to the face, because he was to be blamed.⁴ Notice also that this authority is given to Peter to shepherd the sheep. Now the twofold work of a shepherd is often lost sight of. It is not only that of leading to the pastures, but also that of using the sharp knife, cutting to the very quick to get at the root of the evil that renders the sheep unable to walk aright; also in hedging up the way in which the sheep would wander if left to its own will, or with the crook throwing it down, that it may come yet more closely under the shepherd's eye. Yet all this can be done with a true shepherd's heart and love to the sheep. This same aspect of shepherd care and rule

¹ Acts xx. 31.

² Matt. xvi. 16.

³ 2 John 10, 11.

⁴ Gal. ii. 11.

is spoken of in connection with the elders of the church of Ephesus.¹ They are to shepherd the flock, as Peter says,² not as lords over it, for the shepherd is generally but the servant of another, to whom he must one day give an account. When the Chief Shepherd shall appear the faithful ones are promised a crown of glory.

We would also notice a similar thought in Revelation ii. 27 (the same word being used in the original), where the overcoming one in the present age is to have a place of authority in the one to come, to rule the nations with a rod of iron in company with the Lord Himself, as seen in chapter xix. 15, being partaker of His authority. Yet will this be but the bringing in of universal peace and blessedness to this weary earth.

We have a parallel thought in 1 Thessalonians v. 13, where peace among the saints is connected with the thought of God-given rule. "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another."³

Before leaving the subject of rule and authority, if any should say that what we have written is not applicable to the present state of the churches because we have no elders apostolically appointed, we reply that this in no wise does away with the authority of those divinely given as guides in the assemblies of the Saints (Heb. xiii. 17). We believe the appointment of any to oversight in the churches of God by an apostle, or one acting by his authority, *did not qualify* such for the position, but only pointed them out to the saints as those already qualified of God for this work. Such are to-day pointed out, not by apostles, but by their divinely-described fitness, and by their doing the work God has called them to.⁴ Let us also remember that whilst seventy elders were specially appointed for a particular work in Numbers xi. 16, there were multitudes of other elders

¹ Acts xx. 28.

² 1 Pet. v. 2.

³ Mark ix. 50.

⁴ 1 Thess. v. 12, 13.

who shared with them the responsibilities of rule in the assembly of Israel.

Before we specially turn our attention to the last Within and Without which we shall refer to in these pages (1 Cor. v.), we would ask our readers to notice the difference between the church action of this chapter (for it is church action, and not only apostolic) and the action in 2 Timothy ii. In the latter case we have not "put out," for the power to do this has evidently been lost by those in question, but "come out," not "purge out," but for the one who has an ear to hear to purge himself out from the evil doctrine and the holders of it; so the one naming the name of Lord (see R.V.) is to depart from iniquity, and this iniquity, or blasphemy,¹ is doctrinal, not moral evil. No wonder that the writer of the pamphlet before referred to passes this passage by, until, as he says, his attention was called to it. And yet, in the face of this scripture, shall we still be told we are to remain in the company of blasphemers? How, then, can judgment begin at the House of God?² But some say that the judgment which begins at the House of God is only internal discipline. This we have already shown from Scripture, and shall yet further prove, is an argument without foundation.

Whether in purging out, or in coming out, when the House of God, ceasing to be such, becomes the house of the people,³ the authority of the Lord is maintained, either within, as in the former case, or with those who take their place without, as in the latter. No doubt Hymeneus and his company might have retained the original place of meeting, and even the very seats. Still he and his company ceased to form part of the House of God, and those obeying the call, "Come out," continued to be the church of the living God—pillar

¹ 1 Tim. i. 20.

² 1 Pet. iv. 17.

³ "Your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. xxiii. 38).

and ground of the truth. This is seen by the address to the church in Ephesus in Revelation ii., where they are reminded of their first love and works—a love which led them to act for God in trying those who claimed to be apostles, divinely sent with a message from heaven, whom they proved to be liars, and whom they judged.¹ This, remember, is addressed to the church, not to apostles or elders.

Before we pass on, let us observe that, although Paul had, with apostolic authority, delivered over the blasphemer to Satan in 1 Timothy i. 20, yet it would appear that the church as such had not carried out his judgment, possibly because doctrinal evil was thought little of, as it is to-day, although it more immediately affects the glory of our Lord, while moral evil often more immediately affects *our* character. The nice man, full of smooth words and fair speeches, though a holder of that which would undermine the whole Christian faith,² is received with open arms, the excuse often given that he does not teach his doctrine, or force it upon others, while the man guilty of moral evil is summarily dealt with, because *our* characters are at stake. Be this how it may, we see that Paul's judgment could not be carried out in the church by him alone. Church action was needed, as in 1 Corinthians v., to make it valid; this being lacking (as we apprehend), we find the blasphemer within in 2 Timothy ii. So the further revelation of the Lord's mind is given in this epistle. We believe that with this further revelation of the Lord's will—how His children are to act when evil has arisen within and there is no longer power to put without—the principles for church action are completed—that is, that all that is needed to meet our needs in

¹ Notice that in Revelation ii. 2 it is the past tense—"didst try," "didst find them liars"; also verse 3 (see R.V.), referring them back to a work which they had ceased to do, and charging them to repent and do it.

² Rev. ii. 14.

every difficulty that arises has been revealed. These principles may be supplemented in other second epistles, or in John's third, but that is all; and if this be so, it most fully explains why, in the addresses to the seven churches in the book of Revelation, the responsibility of each for all the others is expressed by the call to each to hear the messages to all, and thus each church was thrown back for guidance as to required action upon the revelation of the will of God which had already been given, and which did not need repetition.

We see this principle distinctly in 2 Timothy iii. 16, where we are thrown back on previous scriptures for the setting up again,¹ not of some new thing, but of the church of God, according to the divine pattern once for all delivered to the saints. Not a something to be called by another name than a church of God, such as "a meeting for *all* Christians to break bread," or, because "the church is in ruins," a meeting where each one can do what is right in his own eyes, as in Judges xvii. 6, but a returning to the old paths, and a taking heed to build according to the already revealed pattern.²

Those who claim to meet according to Acts ii. 44, where we see that all that believed were together, are quite consistent if they repudiate the instruction contained in 1 Corinthians v., and gather all Christians *simply as such*, irrespective of evil doctrine and practice, for in Acts ii. neither the one nor the other had at that point been dealt with, nor had the mind of the Lord been revealed concerning such. Yet to be consistent they should also repudiate the teaching of Matthew xviii. But we go further, and say that were such to carry out in practice their own teaching they would go back neither to Episcopacy nor Presbyterianism, nor to any of the numberless sects which have again divided from these systems of men,—but to the Church of Rome, from

¹ So the Greek.

1 Cor. iii. 10.

which they all dissent, and which differs from them all in this respect, that it commenced as a church of God. It therefore had a divine origin, which the various denominations around us had not, all being the outcome either of the ignorance or of the wilfulness of the human heart; of course we here speak of the systems, not of the Lord's people ensnared in them. But alas for the consistency of such teachers, for they not only remain in assemblies which repudiate their doctrine, but also act in direct opposition to such.

No power to put out or to come out from iniquity! Then there never should have been a Reformation. Romish and Greek apostasy should still be enveloping the nations of the earth with their thick darkness, and the cry, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partaker of her sins," may be unheeded.

But who would not shrink back from all this with a shudder? yet would it not be so were the theory carried out consistently?

We now turn to 1 Corinthians v., where we find that all that believed were no longer together until there had been repentance on the part of the sinning one, and yet the church in Corinth still continued to be the church of God in that place. Notice the heading of the second epistle, at which point the one put away in the first epistle is still outside the church of God in Corinth, although now a repentant one;¹ and even an apostle will not take upon himself to restore to the Fellowship, apart from the action of the assembly. And yet some tell us to-day there is no such thing as receiving in or putting out!

Great stress is laid upon the sin spoken of in this chapter, with the apparent object of making other evils look slight, especially those of doctrine. (Yet see the two things classed together in Mark vii. 21, 22.) We cannot agree with such. The case was probably that of an elder son taking one of

¹ 2 Cor. ii. 7.

his father's wives—very likely one of the younger ones, who was little more than a slave—as his wife. It may be that there was an indistinct idea that conversion to Christianity dissolved the father's marriage tie with all but the first wife, something as missionaries now teach believers from among the heathen to put all but one away. Knowing the terrible corruptions of heathenism, this seems the probable explanation of the expression, "Not so much as named amongst the Gentiles."

Let us, then, notice that the command was to put away from amongst them the sinning one. This expression is further explained in verse 7—"purge out"; in verse 8 they are exhorted to keep the feast with all leaven put away, taking us back in thought to Passover days, when all leaven was to be put out of the camp.¹ Specially notice verse 9, where the word used is not fellowship, but company. Now in verse 11, where we have the same word used in reference to the one who is put away, if it means that, although dealt with, yet he is still within, then surely we will have company with such as well as those spoken of in verse 9. The plea that we have no fellowship with such, although they are still allowed to gather with the assembly, falls to the ground, because it is not here a matter of heart fellowship, but being mixed up with the person in outward association. In the twelfth verse we again have the within and the without that we have traced through the whole of Scripture, and have sought to show that it is the putting outside into the place of judgment the sinning one or ones. Not that when thus without their judgment ceases: those that are without God judges. "Do not ye judge them that are within," writes the apostle, and yet notice that he is not here speaking specially to overseeing ones, yet some will tell us that because apostles and elders have ceased the power to judge within and put without has ceased also!

¹ Exod. xii. 20; Deut. xvi. 4.

Some tell us the closing clause of the last verse, "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person," refers to our own table or home, but if this be so, it is an entire exception to all God's dealings. And without the clearest Scripture evidence we could not accept such an assertion. No doubt it refers to fellowship of every description, or even companying with such within, and this would include our own home, as we find clearly stated in John's second epistle.

Some have tried to argue from the second verse of this chapter that had there been godly sorrow on the part of the assembly the sinning one would have been taken away, and that without the action of the church; but is this the force of the expression at all? Is it not rather that had there been godly sorrow God would have at once shown them how to act in the matter? For be it remembered there was no precedent to guide them, no revelation of God's will had been made to them, unless it was in Matthew xviii., and they may not even have been acquainted with this scripture.

The case of the Sabbath-breaker in the Old Testament, who was shut up until the will of God was learned concerning him (Num. xv. 34), illustrates well what we mean. Had there been a godly sorrow on the part of the saints in Corinth, there would have been a corresponding shutting up *within*, as in Romans xvi. 17, till the will of the Lord was revealed. God tested the obedience of the children of Israel, whether they would pass over this sin in their midst; so likewise the church of God was tested¹ as to their allegiance to Him.

Again, we see the Lord did not act apart from the assembly, even when there was godly sorrow on the part of the erring one, nor yet did the apostle, but it was the assembly which was to forgive, and thus loose the one who was already loosed in heaven.

¹ 2 Cor. ii. 9.

Let us then keep in mind that the kingdom has not passed away in the present age—that there is still the within and the without, that power to carry out the will of God is ours within, although apostles and appointed elders have passed away. In the coming age judgment will be executed upon those that are in the field, not the assembly,¹ when the kingdom will again widen out and the nations of the earth will be embraced in it. The kingdom for the present age does not differ so largely as some would teach from the kingdom of the past or the kingdom yet to come, but was limited first down to the church on earth, and now to those faithful to their rejected Lord, to those who it may be in much weakness are seeking to carry out His will, and not simply meeting to break bread on a Lord's Day morning, and then doing their own pleasure during the rest of the week.

We have now, in closing this article, simply to remind those who may read it that the whole bearing of Scripture throughout its pages would teach us two things: first, that authority and power has ever been placed in the hands of agencies that may fail or misuse it; secondly, that there has been in the past, is to-day, and will be in the age to come, and through the ages of eternity, the solemn within and without—the without ever speaking in its misery of the final accomplishment of the will of God; the within in its blessedness also ever telling of His will being done. The latter a savour of life unto life; the former a savour of death unto death.

J. A. BOSWELL.

¹ "The field is the world" (Matt. xiii. 38-41).

JOTTINGS ON THE EPISTLE TO TITUS.

THE name Titus means honourable. That meaning, linked with the name Timothy (who honours God), gives us a clue which enables us to apprehend the purpose of God in these epistles. Indeed, we are well assured that it is only as one learns the will of God and carries it out, as words to Timothy direct, that he may have this testimony before his translation, that he pleases, because he honours, God! While, as learning and obeying the words to Titus, such an one will approve himself honourable—*i.e.*, one whom God is able and pleased to honour.

Paul applies unique titles to himself in this epistle—(1) as a bond-servant of God, and (2) apostle of Jesus Christ. These according to (1) the faith of God's chosen ones, and (2) the right or full knowledge of truth, which is according to godliness; these, too, upon hope of life eternal, which the God who cannot lie promised before the times of ages, and manifested His Word in its own seasons, in proclamation which was entrusted to Paul, according to the commandment of our Saviour God. The term bond-servant of God doubtless points to the manner of life indicated in Romans vi. 16: "Know ye not, that to whom ye present yourselves as servants unto obedience, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"

Connecting that with 1 Corinthians vi. 20, we see a very special demand that we should be pleasing to God in the use we make of our bodies. But are we so? Apostle of Jesus Christ suggests that the bearing of his words is not merely that he has been sent by Jesus Christ; but also that his work as such is to lead up unto Him. We jot that the term Jesus Christ is always connected with truths intended

to lead man up from himself to God. The expression Christ Jesus is rather a fitting of man from God to men. Moreover, it is essentially necessary that we recognise that Paul was such bondman and apostle according to the faith of God's chosen ones. This is not "the Faith" which unfolds the will of God concerning everything. It is rather that belief of the heart which comes through hearing, and goeth out in the energy of Him who is heard; for, after all, what men speak of as

"SAVING FAITH"

is, if rightly understood, faith which lays hold of the Saving One (Acts xv. 11, R.V.).

GREAT FAITH

is faith in the Great One (Matt. viii. 2-10).

STRONG FAITH

is faith in the Strong One (Rom. iv. 20-22).

PRECIOUS FAITH

is faith in the Precious One and His precious blood (2 Pet. i. 1; 1 Pet. i. 19; ii. 6, 7).

Besides, Paul declares that he was bondman and apostle, as truth according to godliness at once attests and approves (comp. John iii. 12; 1 Tim. iii. 16).

That manner of truth is very different from "truth in the Law," which mainly goes to show what man is, as well as what he ought to be and do; whereas "truth as in Jesus" rather leads to the learning Christ, whom if we hear and heed we shall find ourselves saved as saints, since we, AS (*not WHILE*) new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby (or therein) unto salvation (1 Pet. ii. 2, R.V.). For which cause it behoves us ever to receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save our souls, our lives, our selves (Jas. i. 21). To Titus, as to Timothy, Paul wrote as being a genuine child, accord-

ing to COMMON FAITH. The word "common faith" throws no common light upon verses 2 and 3 of this first chapter. Hence, while some, who understand neither what they say nor whereof they affirm, contend that none have eternal life now, because here it is written in (rather, upon) hope of eternal life, we answer that every child of God is genuinely so through a common faith (common because of resting in a Common Saviour), which issues in a common salvation (He saved us), that is expressed in gospel words, such as "These things have I written unto you that ye may know that ye have eternal life, ye who believe on the Name of the Son of God" (1 John v. 13). Every Christian may tenaciously hold and contend for as an axiom of interpreting Scripture that no scripture contradicts nor clashes with another scripture! Wherefore let us be careful not to allow that which we find difficult to comprehend to thwart our conception of, or our enjoyment in, that which is as clear and plain as the other may be hard and difficult. The apostle wished for Titus that grace and peace might be unto him from God the Father and Christ Jesus the Saviour of us. We, too, pray that no lesser blessing may be vouchsafed to every reader. Wonderful as were the grace and peace that reached us as sinners, no less wonderful nor less real are these as He hath them for us as saints. Nor, we may add, are they less effective in His glory and our blessing; albeit they are now expressed and experienced in new relationships.

Paul and Titus being in the Island of Crete, the apostle finds that he cannot personally remain to overtake all that the will of God required should be done. Consequently, he leaves Titus there, with instructions to set in order that which remains to be done. Firstly, he desired that Titus should set down (such is the sense of the word "ordain" here) elders according to the city. Let it be well noted that here it is elders according to the *city*! although in

earlier days this had been done FOR the churches, when it was also

ACCORDING TO THE CHURCHES,

as see Acts xiv. 23. Secondly, that Titus might effectually discharge the duties enjoined upon him for Crete alone, he is told what characteristics he is to look for in the men whom thus he sets down as elders. According to the city (see vers. 6-9), several reasons are named as to why such men should be so set. We would consider these; "For there are many *unruly* vain-talkers and *MIND-deceivers*." The word "unruly" means open refusal to walk according to order! It expresses defiance, or *even neglect*, of such a command as 1 Corinthians xiv. 40. It tells of another spirit than that of Colossians ii. 5, 6; and, in a word, shows how far saints can get from God and the ways which be in Christ, as compare 1 Thessalonians v. 14, 2 Thessalonians iii. 6. How very solemn that these unruly ones were, and yet are, busy ministrants, who deceive the very mind of those who enter into their lawless ways, enticed by vain words. Because of which it became a necessity to put bit and bridle in their mouth; if peradventure they may be prevented from still turning whole houses upside-down, teaching things which they ought not, and that for shameful gain. Over against which may be set Paul's endeavour in the matter of gain, as see Philippians iii.—

"THAT I MIGHT GAIN CHRIST."

The national disposition of the Creteans was so notorious and definite that Titus was bidden receive the witness borne to that by one of their own poets, for which cause or reason he was told to convict them with sharpness, lest otherwise they might be unsound in *the Faith*. Is there not most needful instruction here for preachers and teachers as they go in and out and seek unto varying peoples of the earth? Indeed, is there not here an explanation of how so

many that seemed to run well by-and-by make such terrible shipwreck of "*the Faith*"? Whereas, had their natural characteristics been regarded, and their conscience roused by being instructed in "*the Faith*," even with sharpness or severity, if need be, would they not have been saved from such shipwreck as, alas! they make? often thus calling more for pity than for blame, as well as being the voice of God unto greater care and faithfulness to such as may yet be saved (comp. Acts xx. 26, 27; 1 Tim. iv. 16).

Giving heed to Jewish stories and commandments of men had and has but one result, a very sad one—even to turn men away from the Truth. That fact shows that no one can be sound in "*the Faith*" except as they are turned to the rightful knowledge of the Truth. Further, the Truth is not to be found in fables nor in commandments of men, but rather as the Lord Jesus testifies, "Thy Word is truth" (John xvii.) In connection with which, what a flood of divine light is expressed in the word here spoken, "Unto the clean, all things are clean; but to the unclean and unbelieving nothing is clean." Their very mind, (the thinking faculty), through which they pass God's word, and their conscience (the knowing faculty) is unclean. No marvel, then, that they are abominable (abhorred) and unpersuaded (thus disobedient), and by every *good work* disapproved. Nor can they or any be otherwise, since by the Scriptures alone is the man of God perfected and thoroughly furnished unto every good work. All these, moreover, were before prepared by God that we, who are His workmanship, might walk therein, as created in Christ Jesus thereunto. But are we so walking? Are we walking only in that which is required of us by the Word of truth rightly divided? If so, we shall know ourselves as doing the first works, or works as at the beginning, having regard to all the after words resembling "It is written again," for thus only can the Word of truth be rightly divided. In contrast

to these empty-talking, *mind*-deceiving ones, Paul would that Titus should speak the things that become or grace sound teaching. Thus, the aged men should be sober, grave, temperate or discreet, being healthful in "*the Faith, the love, the patience.*"

Each one of these six points calls for special attention on the part, not only of the aged men for themselves, but also of every one that seeks to be honoured of God, lest because of refusal to entreat the elder men as fathers, they be unsound in "*the Faith,*" the love, or the patience. Who can tell how helpful or disastrous and far-reaching such influence and example may be? Likewise the *aged women* should be in behaviour as becometh holy women, not slanderers, nor enslaved to much wine, but teachers of good things, in order that the younger women be temperate or discreet, being loving to their husbands and their children; withal chaste

HOME WORKERS,

good, under God's order, to their own husbands, that the Word of God be not evil spoken of.

Young men also exhort to be temperate or discreet, in all things showing thyself a pattern of beautiful works. In teaching, being uncorrupt, grave, using healthful words that cannot be condemned, that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed (and thou honoured), having no evil thing to say of you. *Bond-servants* exhort to be, under God's order, to their own masters. How can they, if they do not seek unto God's mind for instruction? Are you a servant? Have you done and are you doing so? In all things seeking to be well-pleasing; not answering again (speaking back), neither purloining (*i.e.*, indulging in appropriating trifling or little things that are the masters' and not theirs), but rather showing all good trustworthiness, in order that the *teaching* of God our Saviour they may adorn

in all things. For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation to all men, hath shined forth, teaching us such and more that we hope to follow up in our next issue.

JOHN BROWN.

HUMANITARIANISM AND THE MYSTERY.

THE most renowned of living politicians recently cheered his followers by the cry, "The flowing tide is with us!" meaning that the minds, the thoughts, and the aspirations of the majority of men were tending in the direction that he and those with him wished them to take.

Of the matters of which he spoke we are not the judges, and about them we have nothing to say; yet it is true that there are tides in the affairs of men, and currents in which human thoughts flow, which vary in intensity and direction from time to time, and of which the man of God should take cognizance, should have knowledge; for whatsoever the direction of the flow, it is always *against him*, because always in enmity against his Lord; and his danger is, that instead of withstanding the current, he should insensibly be carried with the stream.

Observers of men agree that in the world of religion and benevolence, and at this present time, the tide has set strongly in the direction of HUMANITARIANISM, the gospel of which the Fifeshire schoolmaster¹ was the apostle and the prophet, and which, proclaimed by him in words of rugged eloquence, and oftentimes of burning power, has wrought an effect in the minds and thoughts of men that is not always appreciated.

Humanitarianism has for its end and aim the doing good to men as men; it is like the first Adam—"of the earth,

¹ Thomas Carlyle.

earthy." It may take a distinctly religious form, and set itself to convert the world, it may assume a philanthropic shape, and spend itself in attempting by persuasion, education, Act of Parliament, or what not, to make fallen man moral, sober, and happy; or again, it may take a socialistic form, that which would by force wrest from those who have, and of theirs give to those who have not, that all may be equal.

Whatever be the form, the end and the aim is the same—the good of man, and the good of man alone. Its source is in the human mind, and as water never can rise higher than the source from which it flows, so that which begins in man must end in him. God has no part in it, and its objects and its aspirations never rise to Him.

Humanitarianism is of itself foredoomed to failure, for apart from God there can be no real and lasting good; and though in its workings there may be appearances of good, yet they are like the apples of the Dead Sea—fair to the sight, but as gravel to the teeth and as ashes to the taste.

This tide has swept into its stream many of the children of God, and not a few of those who, professedly, have been gathered together unto the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Its movement in and through these last may still be discovered by the way in which those who are affected by it allow themselves to put the good of man into the place of the will of God. Thus, if the plain, definite teaching of Scripture as to "the fellowship" as constituted by God, and as to reception into it as required by God, is put before such, in a moment they cry, some in tones of grief, others in accents of anger, "What! are we to shut out the dear children of God from their heavenly Father's table?" Or if the equally plain commands of the Lord as to separation from all that is not after the pattern of things in the heavens are urged upon them, they answer: "Do you

imagine that *we* are going to cut ourselves off from beloved fellow-saints, with whom we have had sweet communion for years, just because they don't see with *us*?" And one tells you he "dwells in the parish of All Saints," and another that his fellowship is with "the whole Church of God"—whatever he may mean by the phrase.

We write in this plain outspoken way because these phrases sound well to some ears, and many being satisfied with them are thus being led into bondage and even into the snare of the Devil. Yet they are so empty, so shallow, that but a minute's reflection suffices to manifest their character and their origin—to show that they pertain to that which is "by sight," not "by faith," and that they emanate from man's heart, and not from God's Word.

Much of this arises from the failure to understand that this earth, though as but a drop in the ocean of God's creation, is the moral centre of the universe; that the redeemed from amongst men, though small in number, feeble in power, and limited in understanding, form the medium through which God is working out purposes of eternal and of universal import, infinitely beyond the understanding of any of us; and that the world is the field wherein the conflict is taking place between good and evil, light and darkness, heaven and hell. So that as far as matters "religious" are concerned all that is done amongst men must be done under the influence and by virtue of the power of one or the other great cause—that is to say, with the energy wherewith God "wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies"¹; or with that which is, "according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."²

Failing to understand this, men occupy themselves with

¹ Eph i. 19, 20.

² Eph. ii. 2.

effects, and disregard the causes, considering these too remote, too indefinite, to be worthy of attention or regard.

Remote causes have sometimes unpleasantly near effects. It is a far cry from this to the "Celestial Empire," and to its little known Yellow River, and we have well-nigh forgotten that that river burst its banks in the spring of 1888, and that nearly *seven millions* of poor Chinamen went out into eternity in the desolation wrought by its turbid waters; yet competent authority, dealing with the epidemic that has devastated the Western world, and has doubled, aye, even quadrupled, the death-rate of some of its cities, has traced with something of certainty the present effect of sickness and of death back to its cause in the seven million corpses that festered and rotted into dust in the *detritus* in the valley of the Yellow River.

The causes from which effects spring in the earthly course of the children of God are both far from us and near to us, paradoxical as that may appear. They are far—as far "as the heavens are from the earth"—yet they are near, around us and in us, even as the Spirit of God is in us. We cannot influence or affect them; they influence and affect us; but we can so walk, and worship, and work, that the mouth of God's great enemy may be stopped, and God's holy Principalities caused to rejoice. What this would mean in the way of real blessing to men, heart cannot imagine nor tongue tell.

That it may be there must be understanding of the mind and knowledge of the will of God as to that which is now divinely called "THE MYSTERY."

Very lightly would we touch the matter here; the theme is so great and so high that we would rather seek to provoke inquiry, and to revive interest in it, than attempt to deal with it in this passing manner.

The word in the Greek tongue which we read "mystery" is derived from a still older word, which means to shut the

mouth, and was applied to that which was, but which was so hidden that it could only be known to the initiated; for there were then, as now, mysteries of darkness, which could only be learned in the dark places of the earth.

As the word is used in the Scripture, "mystery" is that which is altogether beyond the reach of man's natural powers, something which unaided reason cannot grasp, and which the "soulish" man cannot know.

The great apostle, therefore, who had himself come to the knowledge of "THE MYSTERY" by revelation,¹ prayed without ceasing for those to whom he wrote, that to them might be imparted a "spirit of wisdom and revelation,"² knowing full well that without it his words would be misapprehended and his teaching lost.

There are many mysteries—some of light and some of darkness, some of God and some of the Devil. But greatest of all, and concerning us most closely—for we are in it and of it, through the sovereign grace of God—is "THE MYSTERY OF GOD, which is CHRIST."³ The "mystery of Godliness"⁴ was Christ,—Christ in His own person,—in Him God was manifested in flesh, the Word was made flesh, and, as in a tent,⁵ dwelt amongst men, God and man in one, but even then men knew Him not, except as by special revelation of the Father.⁶

The Christ of "the Mystery" is not the Son of God's love in His own proper person; the word includes more than Himself—in it He is supreme—of it He is the head, and each of the glorious multitude which makes up its fulness is at once the fruit of His travail and the token of His wisdom, His grace, and His truth. On the cross He purchased with His blood the number of its members, and on the judgment-seat He will order and arrange those members, according to God's purpose and to His own will,

¹ Eph. iii. 3.

² Eph. i. 17.

³ Col. ii. 2, R.V.

⁴ 1 Tim. iii. 16.

⁵ John i. 14.

⁶ Matt. xvi. 17.

till, complete in His completeness, and comely in His comeliness, it stands, "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners," to the eternal glory of God, and to the everlasting shame of His adversaries.

The Christ of the Mystery is the "CHRIST" of 1 Corinthians xii. 12, the "ONE NEW MAN" of Ephesians ii. 15; for "*in* (not by) one Spirit were we all baptized *into* one Body," and that by the operation of the one Lord;¹ and from that moment our identity should have been lost in Him, and our wills sunk in His (the very characteristic of the Mystery being "Christ is all and in all"), that God's purposes might be known to us,—for there is more than even this which God would have His people know,—and that these purposes might be accomplished in and through us.

Let there be no confusion about this. The Mystery is all of God. It is by His act that a man passes from a place "in Adam" to one "in Christ." There may indeed have been human instrumentality in the leading of the man to Christ as Saviour, for God still manifests "His word through preaching,"² but "salvation is of the Lord," and the place "in Christ" is due to God, and God alone; human operation has no part in it, and therefore there is no human responsibility as to it. The "one Body" is a great and glorious truth; without its knowledge we would be to-day as a rudderless vessel. But it is not, as some say, "the only ground of true corporate action," and it is not, as others say, "the only circle of fellowship which the child of God should know."

This is proved (1) negatively, in that Scripture is silent on the matter; (2) positively, by the fact that evil doctrine or evil conduct on the part of one who is unquestionably in the Mystery and a member of the Body will bring about a present separation from him even more complete than if he were a child of wrath on his way to hell.

¹ Matt. iii. 11; Acts i. 5.

² Titus i. 3.

For all this, as we have said, there are purposes to be accomplished in and through us which ignorance of the Mystery will lead us to overlook, and then rob God of glory and ourselves of joy.

Consider, therefore, the words of one writing, not as an apostle above and beyond us all, but as "*less than the least of all saints*";¹ and mark the twofold grace given to such an one—(1) "To preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ"; (2) "To make ALL see what is the ADMINISTRATION OF THE MYSTERY . . . to the intent that *now* unto the Principalities and the Powers in the heavenlies might be known, through the Assembly, the manifold wisdom of God; according to a plan of the ages² which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Here is agency, arising out of gift, and carrying with it cognate responsibility: "To enlighten all" (it will be noticed that the word "men" is italicized, having no place in the original—the allusion is not to men at all), not as to the Mystery, which is a matter of God's revelation, but as to its ADMINISTRATION—for so we prefer to render the word translated dispensation in the Revised Version³—its *working-out* by those who in it are but as *stewards*, under authority and dealing with that which is another's, and not their own.

Space forbids our doing more than point out the significance of the purpose for which this agency and stewardship was constituted, "that now unto the Principalities . . . might be known THROUGH THE ASSEMBLY the manifold wisdom of God."

No humanitarian object this; it is not that "the dear saints might be helped," or that "poor sinners might be

¹ Eph. iii. 8-12.

² So the Greek. See Rotherham's translation.

³ The word "fellowship," which occurs here in the Authorized Version, is quite a modern reading, and is not found in a single manuscript of any antiquity.

saved," or that good of any kind might be done to men, but that God's WISDOM might be known; and what blessing this would mean to saint and sinner, we say again, heart cannot imagine nor tongue tell; for all God's present purposes are full of grace and compassion, of tender love and longing for the true good of His creature man, but He has His own way of bringing this about, and it is not by humanitarianism, which in all or any of its phases is but a device of the enemy to throw dust in the eyes of the children of the Most High, and to cause them to "walk as men," regarding and savouring of "the things of men," and not "the things of God."

W. H. HUNTER.

DIVISION.

AMONGST the number of the children of God who are to-day found in the place of those who have been gathered together to the Name of the Lord Jesus, wholesome fears are entertained of divisions. It is no part of our purpose to lessen godly fears, for in many, if not most cases, the Lord's name has been greatly dishonoured by divisions among His people. It seems, however, as if the time had come for us to seek help from Scripture, and to inquire whether divisions are *always* unmitigated evils.

In Genesis i. a condition of things in the material world is set out which clearly was out of harmony with the desires of that world's Creator. The earth had become without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. We are left without much information as to the causes which operated to the marring of God's perfect work, but surely we are safe in assuming that Satan was then, as now, the prime mover and direct cause of the blight.

To reform and to restore the marred earth was God's work. He is always *constructive* and *restorative* in His operations, while Satan is ever *destructive* and *subversive*. In this chaos of matter elements which in themselves were heterogeneous were hopelessly confused together, materials which had nothing in common were made to mingle in one vast ruin. Creation's God of Genesis i. is the same as the Christian's God of 1 Corinthians xiv. 33, and is not the author of confusion, nor does He bring together, much less hold and keep together, "the precious and the vile"—elements which are in active or passive opposition and impossible of reconciliation. Mark then His way: "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God *divided* the light from the darkness." Here then is the first record of *division*,

while as yet man had no being, save in the mind and purpose of Him who worketh all things according to the counsel of His will. None may question the wisdom which prompted this *division*, nor dare any question the *necessity* for it. The glory of Elohim could not be displayed without it, and the future home of man must show forth God's handiwork.

This great initiatory act of *division* was followed by the calling into existence of a firmament, which *divided* the waters from the waters, and the formation of luminaries or light-bearers in the firmament of heaven, to *divide* the day from the night and to *divide* the light from the darkness.

We are apt to forget that *division* holds the place of priority in all God's works when those works are exercised in the sphere where sin and Satan have been or are. Only after the command for division do we read the words, "Let the waters under the heaven be *gathered together* unto one place, and let the dry land appear." God gathers after He divides, and what He brings together thus becomes "fruitful and brings forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life," and "the fruit tree yielding fruit whose seed was in itself after his kind." Of the fruitfulness and harmony of these homogeneous elements brought together by divine command we may have to speak hereafter. This then is the first record of divisions, and who would pronounce them evil when the Divine Operator Himself declared them to be *very good*?

It was of this creation, considered in all its detail and workings (though marred by sin), that the Psalmist exclaimed, "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches. So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. . . . The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever: the Lord shall rejoice in His works" (Ps. civ.). What glory He displayed by His dividing operations!

But great as was the chaos and darkness upon which the Spirit of God moved, great as was the glory which He reaped from its reformed estate, a still greater ruin was yet to yield Him infinitely greater glory. Not now a confused mass of things material, but a spiritual desolation—death and darkness. From out that fall He must gather glory—glory which even now He wishes to display to *principalities and powers in the heavenly places* and to make known the manifold wisdom of God by the Church (Eph. iii. 10). Creation glory displayed “His manifold works,” but redemption glory His “manifold wisdom.”

Whether we consider God’s dealings with man in one dispensation or in another, the order observed in bringing him into the place of testimony is the same as in creation work: first the giving of light, and then the separating of the enlightened one from the surrounding works of darkness.

If it be Noah, he finds grace in the eyes of the Lord, then he is brought into an ark. If it be Abram, he receives the commandment, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee.” If it be Israel as a people, then *out* of Egypt God must call His Son. And, finally, if it be the Church, then God takes *out* from the Gentiles a people for His name.

Thus we have the principle of division—of separation—exemplified under every condition of testimony; and emphasized by the wholly separated One, who said, “Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, *Nay*; but rather *division*: for from henceforth there shall be five in one house *divided*, three against two, and two against three” (Luke xii. 51, 52).

W. J. ERVINE.

Other Lands.

CANADA AND UNITED STATES.

LETTER FROM MR. JOHN RAE.

“BRANDON, MANITOBA, CANADA.

“*Jan 16th, 1890.*”

“Dear brethren in Christ,—

“It is now nearly two years since we came to Brandon. There was no meeting then. I met with only one who seemed to have an honest heart and an inquiring mind after the truth, and she was the first to follow it and take her place with us outside the camp, to the Lord Jesus’ worthy Name. We now number over thirty in assembly. And there are now besides five or six small beginnings in country districts round, where the two or three thus gathered have the promise of His presence with them. Blessing is being given with the gospel preached in some of these parts: some have been saved of late, and are being identified with those out to the Lord’s Name, and more doors are being opened for the preaching of the Word, and some are being led out among us to give themselves to the work.

“A good deal of labour has also been expended on the streets of Brandon in preaching in the open air. A bold testimony has thus been given, and many have listened with interest and come to hear more at our Gospel Hall: strangers and emigrants passing through are often found at the meetings outside and inside, and we are encouraged by some showing concern and by some saying, ‘they never saw it in the same way before.’ Many are much disappointed in the country, and most of the Lord’s children who have strayed here have been emptied out, and have lost hope of temporal success, and some at least desire to get back to God and His ways. This we have seen to be a needed discipline. This is a very trying winter, many having little or no crops, owing to drought and other drawbacks, and it is now intensely cold. For several months it is almost impossible to get about in gospel work—in fact, we find it difficult to meet in the coldest nights even in the city. Several of the Lord’s servants have visited us and cheered us. We were delighted to have the presence and ministry of Mr. Ross, of Chicago, at our first believers’ Conference held here in Brandon, in October last. It was a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Other meetings were held in Winnipeg and in parts of Dakota, where the Lord has been saving souls and gathering out a people to His Name. At West Selkirk, full twenty miles north of Winnipeg, on the Red River, a testimony has been raised which God has owned to the saving of some souls and gathering to the Lord.

“Several half-breeds and the Indian chief of the Crees, with his son, also their wives, professed during the past summer to have been born again, and they are now taking a decided stand for Christ and His truth. One of these, who is well educated and holds the position of a school teacher, is a powerful and telling speaker in the Cree language, and it is to be hoped will prove useful among the Indians. This is a most important opening to a great field *beyond*—all along the Red River, northward many miles, extending to the great Lake Winnipeg. Printed messengers are now being circulated among them, and only a beginning has been made in preaching Christ to them.

“Prayer should be asked that true God-sent labourers may be led forth among them, a people as needy in proportion as those of Africa or of any country under the sun; and with the help of a little interpreting any English speaker might reach some of them, by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the message of God’s great salvation, and win them for the Saviour’s diadem.

“I have not had space to mention the special work which God has been doing in Ontario and other parts of Canada and several of the States of America during the past twenty years or so.

“He raised up and sent special chosen and fitted instruments, chiefly at first from Scotland, who were mightily used to quicken the souls of professors and bring about a season of life in delivering from formality and spiritual darkness and death, and now many assemblies exist as witnesses to the Truth, and in some measure resemble the New Testament pattern, so that even on this continent, amid all the infidelity on the one hand and the corruption and confusion on the other, some saints and some assemblies retain a seasoning savour against a lukewarm Christendom and a world ripe for judgment. Annual Conferences have been held also for many years, which have proved most helpful to many of God’s needy ones in these evil days, in Hamilton and other centres in Canada, and in Chicago, etc., in the States. Also far west by the Pacific Coast, in several parts of California, earnest Gospel and tent work have been carried on for some short time. God has some there who care for His cause, and He has sent true help in some of His gifted servants to encourage His local workers, and souls have been saved and a number gathered there also. Some of His servants are now visiting places and scattered saints in British Columbia, and are preaching the gospel to a needy and careless people, to take out a people for His Name. Thus His coming is being hastened, and when we will see *Him* in His glory we will wish *then* we had been more *alive* to *own*, honour, and serve Him who *alone* is worthy.

“Yours in the blessed Hope,

“JOHN RAE.”

The following notes are taken from a letter by our brother Mr. ALEXANDER MARSHALL, who writes from San Francisco under date 26th December, 1889:—

“We left Orillia in December. After spending a week in Toronto helping Donald Munro, we left, per C.P. Rail, for Winnipeg. Spent a week there, and sought to help the small assembly. Then went to Brandon (Manitoba), 150 miles west, and spent a few days there. Left on Monday evening, and reached Vancouver on the Friday afternoon. The scenery through the north-west from 100 miles west of Calgary, through the Rocky Mountains, was grand—mountains rising 10,000 feet right from the railway track, and that at a height of 4,000 or 5,000 above sea level. On Mount Stephen we saw a glacier said to be 800 feet thick. The British Columbian scenery is very fine; the Fraser and Columbia Rivers several thousand miles long, and the Chinese searching for gold, and the salmon (we saw them) in great quantities. Vancouver four years ago had a population of 600; now it is 16,000. Spent a couple of days there, and then sailed to Victoria, a beautiful English-like city, the capital of British Columbia, on the Island of Vancouver. There are a couple of dozen in fellowship there. Then we took steamer to San Francisco, 833 miles south, and reached it in about sixty hours.

The Believers' Meetings were helpful. D. Munro was the principal speaker. J. Goodfellow and I have been gospelling nightly for ten weeks, and the Lord has given some blessing in the proclamation of His glorious gospel, and some Christians have been helped and led out. I expect to visit one or two other places in California, and towards end or middle of January we return to Victoria, where I hope to have gospel meetings, if I can get a hall at a reasonable rent. This is a most ungodly city—one of the worst I ever was in. There are 40,000 Chinese in “Chinatown,” and yesterday there were several brutal outrages among them with knife and pistol. One Sunday evening last year in August, out of an estimated population of 65,000 young men between sixteen and thirty-five years of age, by actual count there were 1,892 in all the so-called “Evangelical Churches.” On the following Sunday evening, at the principal theatres, concerts, billiard-halls, saloons, and including a base-ball match, there were counted 17,933 young men. There were also at least 3,000 houses of ill-fame, which could not be reached. . . . Among those who have professed at our meetings are two very intelligent German young men and an Alsatian, as well as a Dane, and some Scotch. Scotland is a most highly-favoured country. I hope that the work of the Lord is prospering in your parts, and that you are having the joy of seeing numbers converted to God and living for Him.”

CHINA.

The following is taken from a letter by Mr. Spencer Jones, dated Shanghai, Jan. 31st.

“Please seek, dear brethren, to strengthen my hands in the Lord. I will need all help at this time, lest even the kindness of Christians may turn me aside from the true way, as the May Conference of “Missionaries” in China is at hand. I do ask your prayers and the prayers of God’s dear children earnestly.

“A few weeks since I had the privilege of visiting the S.S. *Leander*, 320 men, British man-of-war. The captain, by special permission, enabled me to go aboard and distribute my Gospel papers and preach before she left. I baptized two dear men from this ship.

“It was a cold night, but bright moonlight, and three blue-jackets came down to the wharf. I had selected a booth, used for checking goods, but found the water had gone down very much. I proposed waiting till it rose, or else going down to the water. We hired a boat, for the water low enough to necessitate our wading through the mud up to knees was too much of a tax upon us. As I was baptizing a dear young convert whom the Lord had used me to, I saw a lady and gentleman arrive from the other side of the river. The lady said, ‘Who is in the water?’ I replied, ‘A testimony-bearer to Jesus’ Name.’ They stopped and witnessed, and then went away to a lecture entitled, ‘Fools and their follies,’ saying they had come away from the latest example of folly. An article appeared in the paper stating that two men from the S.S. *Leander* were undergoing the hydraulic test.”

Our brother was about to be married (God willing) on Feb. 3 to Miss B. Fowles, and he desires the prayers of saints that they may have grace together to cleave to the Lord.

Department of Question and Answer.

“If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God.”—*John vii. 17, R. V.*

QUESTION 17.—*Is there any clue in the Scriptures to the actual date of the birth of the Lord Jesus?*

The remarkable parenthetical note in Luke ii. 2 is undoubtedly such a clue, and appears to have been inserted for the very purpose.

For years this was a point of vantage to those who lightly esteem the Word of God, as unquestionable historic testimony established a Syrian governorship of Publius Sulpicius Quirinus (the “Cyrenius” of the Greek tongue), beginning some ten years after the birth of our Lord; but, as has been the case with many another similar point, the vantage of the infidel has been lost, as a learned German, Dr. Zumpt, of Berlin, has shown well-nigh incontrovertibly that P. S. Quirinus was *twice* governor of Syria, and that it is his first period of office to which the evangelist alludes.

Taking, then, the ascertained dates of this governorship, together with the specified “fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar”¹ (Luke iii. 1), when John the Immerser began his ministry, and which was plainly but a comparatively short time before the commencement of the public ministry of the Lord (at which time He was about thirty years of age—that is, He was in His thirty-first year), we are led to the conclusion that the birth of the Lord took place somewhere about the autumn or close of the year 4 B.C.

W. H. H.

QUESTION 18.—*If an assembly is in error, and a neighbouring assembly endeavour through its oversight to meet with it, and if, after patiently waiting and giving all opportunity for the unitedly seeking to come to one mind and one judgment, the erring assembly, or the one supposed to be in error, still disregards the request of the assembly that desires to meet with it, what ought to be done next?*

Then an appeal should be made to the local oversight of the district, and through it unitedly the erring assembly would be appealed to. If they still refused to hear the united voice of the churches, they, as an assembly, would by this act cut themselves off from the fellowship of the assemblies, for we cannot recognise one act of fellowship, such as the receiving by letter of commendation, or giving the same, and repu-

¹ Augustus Cæsar, whom Tiberius succeeded, died Aug. 19th, A.D. 14.

diate when necessary, the meeting unitedly in oversight and in godly subjection one to another, seeking to deal with the evil that has arisen.

J. A. B.

QUESTION 19.—*Is it right for a believer gathered to the name of the Lord to live with unsaved relations whose lives are most ungodly? Is there any scripture for this to that effect?*

There can be no question that from 1 Corinthians v. 10 a believer will continually have to be in the company of the unconverted and in association with them in business matters, otherwise he must needs go out of the world, as says the apostle.

Yet while thus thrown in the company of the unsaved, his conversation may be ever characterized as heavenly.

In this way multitudes of unsaved ones are being continually won to the truth in like manner, as we see from 1 Corinthians vii. 16.

The unbelieving husband or wife may be gained. The position is often difficult in the extreme, but our God is sufficient for every need, and can make us ever to triumph in Christ Jesus.

J. A. B.

QUESTION 20.—*Is it wrong for a Christian to become a member of "The Protestant Alliance"?*

It is wrong for a Christian to enter into any alliance or association with his fellows in the things of God which is not authorized by the Scripture. The only alliance which has Scripture authority is that described in 1 Corinthians i. 9, and the only membership which God acknowledges for His people that of Ephesians v. 30. All other alliances, whether Protestant or otherwise, are human and not divine—are of the flesh and not of the Spirit.

W. H. H.

QUESTION 21.—*As we are sometimes asked for a scripture to prove that assemblies are called upon to "receive" into fellowship, and are told that we get no such thing in Acts ii., nor indeed any direct command anywhere else in the epistles, are we warranted in making a distinction between Acts ii. and 2 Timothy, etc., even as we would distinguish between the times of the building of Solomon's temple and the restoration and rebuilding thereof in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah? Does Acts ii. give us divine instruction concerning believers coming out of human systems? or is it correct to use Romans xv. 7 as to receiving into fellowship?*

In Acts ii. we find that the believers continued in a fellowship. What was this fellowship? and how did they get into it if there was no reception? If we were to speak in the same way of a partnership (which is implied by the word fellowship) and say Mr. A and

Mr. B are in partnership together, but they never received one another as partners, and have no power to dissolve the partnership, would it not sound strange in the extreme? Yet, further, we find the word church does not occur in Acts ii. (see Revised Version)—“The Lord added together.” It was the gathering of those materials which, being in the way of salvation, were afterwards builded up into churches of God, when God had raised up to Himself a wise master-builder (1 Cor. iii. 10) to build according to the divine will. To appeal to Acts ii. as our guide for church order would be much as if an Israelite in the days of Ezra appealed to Exodus xiv. 30 as that which was to guide in remnant days. In Exodus xiv. the will of God had been but partially revealed, and Israel *had not* at this point been gathered into divine order. See even in Deuteronomy xii. the expression in verse 8. How could the remnant ever have known the will of God concerning their separation out of Babylon if they had only been guided by the Scriptures given to the nation even up to the day of Solomon? No, but we see they had a further revelation. As to their separation, not from Egypt, but from Babylon, see Daniel ix. 2 and Jeremiah xxv. 11, so 2 Timothy ii. is a revelation for the guidance of those to-day in separating from a spiritual Babylon.

Romans xv. 7 is “Receive ye ONE ANOTHER,” and therefore has no reference to reception into fellowship.

J. A. B.

A TRANSATLANTIC QUESTION.

A PREACHER of the Gospel, beloved for his own sake and much esteemed for his earnest and disinterested labours, writes from the other side of the Atlantic deep suggesting that a fitting subject for consideration in these pages might be found in a question which he thus propounds, "How can power be restored to the assemblies?"

Our brother's question is entitled to all attention and respect from us, not only because of the source from whence it comes, but because it undoubtedly gives expression to the longing of many earnest hearts and to the yearning of many devoted spirits.

If any effort is made to answer it, some satisfactory explanation of the meaning of its central word, POWER, must be found. What is meant by POWER? Does it mean crowded meetings, moving addresses, much hearty singing, many apparent conversions, largely increased numbers, and "a good time" generally? or, in other words, does it mean success, outward and apparent success, visible and delightful triumph? for if it does, there is a ready answer to the question—satisfy men's fancies; gratify men's mind; imitate the "Salvation Army"!

Godly men who (like the propounder of this question) love their Bibles, and read them, will shrink from this, replying at once that while success, such as that we have suggested, must imply the putting forth of power, it does not necessarily follow that *the power is of God*; and that a suspicious taint attaches to such success in that there is no Godward tendency in it, no necessary glory to God out of it, for understanding, even slight understanding, of the divine working ever reveals this fact, that that which is *of God*

tends to God, and has for its chief end God's present joy and present glory.

What then is meant by POWER? Is it that which stirs men's hearts into longing for obedience to all the will of God? that through which men's whole being, spirit and soul and body, is in the things of God brought into and enabled to continue in the place which God would have His people to occupy? that, indeed, through which, in this present season, the divine purpose is accomplished if but in part, and the divine ideal realized even in measure?

If this is what is meant, alas for the question! and for the confession it certainly must draw forth, power cannot be restored to the assemblies for the simple reason that it is impossible to restore that which, as we greatly fear, never existed.

Whether it be that, having existed, the power has faded into nothingness, or whether it be that it never had real existence at all, honest candour obliges us to acknowledge its lack to-day, and the pressure of our need may well lead to ask the reason why such lack should be.

Doubtless there are many reasons; one, and one only, will be suggested here.

It is but a truism to say that where God works Satan counter-works, and that his counter-working is sometimes by way of counterfeiting and sometimes by way of co-operating. In the one case he withstands the Lord, as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, by imitating His doings; in the other, he seeks to blemish God's work by blending his own with it.

Not having been left in ignorance of the devices of Satan, we might have expected, and ought to have expected, that in a matter so peculiarly the Lord's and so personal to Christ as that of "the assembly of God," the resources of "the authority of the Darkness"¹ would, if necessary, be

¹ Col. i. 13.

exhausted in the effort to destroy that peculiar and personal character by linking on to it an element that God had never joined with it.

This element is not necessarily, indeed, is not commonly, composed of children of wrath, mere hypocrites, posing in the garb of children of God;¹ but more generally of those who are really born of God, but who were never placed by God in the position they professedly occupy.

So far from those in the assemblies having recognised this special peril, and from having stood on guard against it, a position was taken which invited the efforts of the enemy, and a line of conduct pursued in which unquestionably place was given to the Devil.

The position was that known by some as "Open Brethrenism," and the line of conduct pursued was that of dealing with the Lord's Table as though it were their own, as though *they* were over the House of God, and therefore authorized to invite whom they liked and to bring in whom they pleased.

To describe this line of things the term "occasional fellowship" has been invented, of which it is necessary but to remark that not only is it absolutely and admittedly without scriptural warrant, but that of the two words of which it is built up the one contradicts the other; for if there is that which is "occasional" it cannot be fellowship, and if there is that which is rightly called "fellowship" the word occasional has no sort of relationship to it.

No one now contends that "occasional fellowship" can be found in the Word of God, or that there is divine authority for the opening of a casual ward in the House of God, so that,

¹ And this for the reason that an assembly OF GOD is not any company of believers in the habit of associating together, but a number of "called saints," to each one of whom the call of God unto separation from spiritual and moral evil and into a fellowship which belongs to Christ, and of which He is Head and Lord—has come in power—has been heard and has been obeyed.

while for years past hard words and bitter epithets have been hurled with open-handed liberality against those who have affirmed and re-affirmed the error of the practice and the unscripturalness of its character, it is difficult to know where the man is to be found who, with his open Bible in his hand, will stand before those who have any acquaintance with the subject and allege that he can find support for "occasional fellowship" in the pages of that Book.

Why then has this vain thing not been allowed to vanish like smoke long ago?

Two answers are given to this question, the first having its origin in the traditions of the past—"occasional fellowship" was the way of the "first brethren"—and the second its basis in the exigencies of the present—for, as it is said, "other Christians who are allowed to break bread are often in this way brought into full fellowship, and many of them would never have been brought in except by this course."

Could there be a more thorough playing into the hands of the Devil?

Is not such a course one in which his co-operation is as good as invited? Is it not a way by which it is made an easy thing for people to "join us," or "join the brethren" (as some say), by the breaking down of the safeguards which the wisdom and foreknowledge of God had placed for an evil time—a day of feebleness wherein it could no longer be said "of the rest durst no man join himself to them"¹? and is it not much to be feared that many have joined themselves whom God had never (in this sense) "added to the Lord,"² many taken a place that God had never put them into?

This is no new thing: long, long ago God called Abram, and called him out,³ and the call was as direct, personal, and particular as it well could be—"Get *thee* out." In answering faith Abram "obeyed, and went out,"⁴ but not

¹ Acts v. 13.

² Acts v. 14.

³ Gen. xii. 1.

⁴ Heb. xi. 8.

alone, for Lot went *with him*, an imitator and a parasite—a follower of his uncle, and not of his God.

Thus the uncle and the nephew stand to-day representatives of two classes, types of two distinct elements among the children of God. For "just Lot"¹ was as surely of God's chosen ones as Abram himself, and as such his history witnesses now to those who are, as he was, the chosen of the Lord, and of his life the warning is to them.

Abraham then stands a man of God in a right position, and that because called of God to occupy it. Lot, on the other hand, a man of God still in a right position, but that through the accident of his surroundings, the affection of his heart, or it may be the covetousness of his soul, for Abram was very rich and he had no child.

Whatever cause it was that led him out, *it was not God's call*, for of Abraham it is written, "I CALLED HIM ALONE."² Alone! and therefore in the call there was no place for Lot, and to Lot it never came. Here then were two elements, antagonistic elements,—for the one was divine and the other human—linked together in outward association, joined in an apparent fellowship.

Who is there that does not know only too well what the result was, and what the result ever will be while men are men, and the Devil lies in wait to take advantage of their folly?

Abram in his God-directed journeys got him back to Bethel,³ back to the unseen House of God, and called there on JEHOVAH'S Name. But Lot—what was the House of God to Lot, and what the calling upon JEHOVAH'S name? Just what the Church of God, and the gathering to the name of the Lord, are to many to-day. Phrases, expressions, meaning anything or nothing, as vague as the mist, as indefinite as the clouds, vain words and thoughts

¹ 2 Pet. ii. 7.

² Isa. li. 2.

³ Gen. xiii. 3, 4, 5.

without power, because uttered by men, and carried by hearts to whom God's call *out* has never come.

Noticeable then is that which was written of Lot at the same moment as this bright testimony was borne to Abram: "Lot also, *who went with Abram*, had flocks, and herds, and tents." ¹

Outward success had attended his footsteps. Judged by this standard, we would be constrained to say, he too was "greatly blessed."

All this but threw into sharp relief the inevitable break up of the fellowship, which never had had a divine origin—"They could not dwell together."

The opposing principles clashed, the innate antagonism became more and more manifest, there was strife between their followings, and ABRAM SAID TO LOT, "Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me."

Abram stood upon none of his rights. He gave the younger man, the one time dependent man, his choice of the land and of its advantages: "If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left," but with him longer Lot should not go.

God smiled upon Abram's course thus taken, JEHOVAH spoke with him in power, blessed him with new blessings, and enriched with him new promises.

As for Lot, there is no need here to enter into the story of his sin and of his shame. Had he never come out of Haran, he had never sat in Sodom's gate, never seen his wife blasted by divine judgment before his eyes, and never left as descendants and successors such children of darkness and of hell as the sons of Ammon and the men of Moab.

Has all this no message for us to-day? Is there nothing in it whereby we may understand the counsel of the Most High as to the place of separation, and as to the difference

¹ Gen. xiii. 5.

between those who have taken it at God's call and those who only have appeared to take it because that call had never been heard by them? Is it not manifest that the Lots must be a source of constant and increasing weakness, occasions—perhaps well-meaning and amiable occasions (perhaps not)—of soul-withering strife and God-dishonouring confusion? Is it to be wondered at that honest hearts on both sides of the Atlantic mourn and lament the lack of power, and sigh for its restoration, when a line has been taken through which those of whom Lot is representative have been led into and encouraged to remain in an utterly and grievously false position?

What is the remedy for that which *must* be an admitted evil?

Where there is any certainty of discernment of the spirit of Lot in his latter-day successors there is an obvious answer, and one readily found. Follow Abram's example, and for the sake of the men themselves refuse to maintain an association in the things of God which never had divine sanction and never originated in a divine call.

It may be, however, that the cases are comparatively few in which this certainty of discernment can be said to exist, in which conduct, conversation, or doctrine is such as to put the matter beyond doubt; while the instances are many in which there may be occasion for the gravest questionings and yet the positive assurance required to authorize the imitation of Abram be lacking.

Even in these difficult cases we are not without help. There is still as ever

"A sure resource in God,"

and His words in the 144th Psalm seem as if written "for the present necessity."

That Psalm contemplates a time of warfare and a state of battle for the godly upon the earth, the time for such being

short and fleeting, for "Adam is like to Abel: his days are as a shadow that passeth away." "One life only" is committed to each man's trust; there is no time to waste, no surplus to fool away. Hence, twice over the man cries for deliverance, divine deliverance, from "strange children," whose mouths are full of vanity, mere empty talk, words that perhaps sound well, but mean nothing, and whose hands—right hands—lay hold of falsehood, of the lie, whereby they, themselves being beguiled, deceive others.

Deliverance from such yields answer to our correspondent's question, for following it come the true tokens of power and prosperity, for "our sons" become as "plants grown up in their youth," fragrant and fruitful in the garden of the Lord—their testimony delightful, and their ministry acceptable to God and man; "our daughters as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace"—all the comeliness and attractiveness with which their God has graced them in body and in mind directed to the building together of the stones of the House of God; "our garners full"—saints fed with the finest of the wheat; "sheep brought forth by thousands"—Gospel ministry blessed to the conversion of sinners, and their leading in the ways that be in Christ; "our oxen strong to labour"—the ministry of the Word and teaching restored in power and to profit; "no breaking in, no going out"—the walls and gates of "a city that is compact together"¹ built again; "no complainings"—the murmurers and grumblers silenced by the very blessing, for "blessed is the people that is in such, yea, blessed is the people whose God is the Lord."

To those who seek the blessings of this Psalm we commend its prayer.² Should not such come from us and be heard among us? And should we not hail with gladness any way of God's leading which may be used by Him to bring about its answer?

(W. H. H.)

¹ Psa. cxxii. 3.

² Verses 7 and 11.

THE question that has been asked is, "How is power to be restored in a gathered company of the Lord's people when it has been lost?"

In the first place, we must repeat that it is impossible to restore that which never existed, and we fear if closely looked at that neither in the past nor at the present has been or is assembly power known much of. Power *in* an assembly is often seen and as often seen pass away. Probably it may be said, "Surely this is a distinction without a difference," but such is by no means the case. To illustrate what we mean: a sinner, when converted to God, becomes individually a temple of the Holy Spirit,¹ and if the work of God goes on in him according to His will, he will be sanctified wholly, spirit and soul and body,² and thus become a power for God in the midst of a godless age. This power will make itself felt amongst fellow saints as well as in the world, and not necessarily through any gift possessed by such an individual, for of gift he may have little; it will be the out-shining in him of the grace of God.

But let us ask how such a condition can be brought about? Will it not be by a full surrender of himself to God—a sincere desire for the milk of the Word, that he may grow thereby, individual responsibilities learned and a practical salvation realized through the knowledge of the Truth? "Thy Word is truth."³

Another child of God may be possessed of many gifts, much natural force of character, and yet have little divine power. He may be used in Gospel work, and yet self-will, an unbroken will, may be carrying his feet continually in a pathway of his own choosing, and therefore of disobedience. There are many solemn Scripture examples of such men. "Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord," said Jehu; yet he continued in association with Jeroboam's idolatry.⁴

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 19.

² 1 Thess. v. 23.

³ See 1 Tim. iv. 16.

⁴ 2 Kings x. 29.

Again, "Demas hath forsaken me"; the love of the world and worldliness of heart had led his feet also in the pathway of disobedience.

It is by no means an uncommon thing to see a young Christian so occupied with service that he neglects his own personal education in divine things. The result of this must, in the end, be disastrous to all true spiritual power, and in all probability will lead to the putting of service, or what appears to be such, in the place of obedience, ending in a breakdown and very probably a giving up of all service. We have therefore before us two individuals: the first, a man of God and a man of power; the second, a man of gift, but with little divine power.

Now this may help us in connection with an assembly or church of God. And be it still remembered that this is not merely the coming together of a company of Christians for the breaking of bread, but a divine creation collectively Temple of God, indwelt by His Spirit.¹ Such a company may possess little gift—that is, there may be neither teacher nor evangelist in their midst; yet their power will be felt collectively, and their God will be a wall of fire round about them, there will be the continued growth in the knowledge of His will, and of the doctrines that affect their assembly relationship towards one another, to un-gathered fellow-saints, and to the world.

Be it remembered that the very people to whom the promise was made, "I will be a wall of fire round about you,"² were responsible to build a literal wall, and to put up gates with bolts and bars, which both shut out and shut in, although, sad to say, some of their nobles put not their necks to this work.³

Thus there will be a modelling and moulding to the will of God, and, like the plastic clay in the hands of the potter,

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 16.

² Zech. ii. 5.

³ Neh. iii. 5.

a vessel will be formed meet for the Master's use; and such an assembly will be a collective power for God.

Let it not be supposed that we are here imagining an ideal state of things, in which there will be no failure, and no need of godly rule or discipline. By no means: failure there has been, and ever will be, but, as with a godly individual, the divine nature in him will bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; so in a godly assembly a God-given oversight, composed of men who are themselves led of the Spirit, and God-ordered in their ways, is the divine centre from which God will work in an assembly to the subduing of all things to His own will. This then will be an assembly of real and growing power, being builded up collectively on their most holy faith.¹ The wall with its gates, and their bolts and bars, will be around it, and all things will be done in the full light of the written Word. Such, we repeat, will be an assembly of power.

But what is often mistaken for this? Power in an assembly—that is, an assembly which possesses, it may be, many gifts, active evangelistic work, much energy; and all this for a time carries things smoothly on, and is mistaken for assembly power. But in its early days little heed is given to the doctrines of Scripture, often they are spoken of even in a light and depreciating manner, as though God had revealed that as to which it mattered little whether they heeded it or left it unheeded; and so knowledge of collective responsibility is neglected. This brings its inevitable result. By-and-by worldliness comes in; men prosper, it may be, in the things of time, but get lean in soul. Gospel work is given up, gifts removed, and then it is said the power of the assembly is gone. No, we reply, there never was any, and so it cannot be restored; there must be the breaking down, the repentance before God, and the

¹ Ps. cxlix. 5 to end.

remodelling according to His will, before there can be assembly power.

(J. A. B.)

WE greatly rejoice that in the question before us, as well as elsewhere, there are signs that some at least of those whom God has gathered into the Name are becoming awakened to the fact that something which we greatly need is lacking amongst us, as well as to the presence of much that we would be far better without.¹

An instructive parallel to the present distress is to be found in the history of the returned remnant at the time when Jerusalem lay waste and the gates were burned with fire;² for surely what was the divine remedy then is the divine remedy now. "Come," said Nehemiah, "and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach." Notice the words, "Let us." For here is brought in that principle of fellowship which is so little understood or practised among gathered saints.

Fellowship in service does not consist in a mere sentiment of approbation of the work of others, nor yet does the actual helping of others by the purse or otherwise necessarily imply fellowship with them. For unto the existence of true fellowship in service it is absolutely essential that all those in question should be by common consent doing the same one work. They may be occupied in different parts of it; herein there is variety; but if it be not recognised as one work, if there be no definite intelligent co-operation, there is no fellowship.

Co-operation according to God is beautifully exemplified in this account of the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem.³ A number of God's servants, awakened to the distress they were in by one newly come among them, and hearing of the will of their God and of His provision for their need,

¹ Contrast Rev. iii. 17.

² Neh. ii. 17.

³ Neh. ii., iii., iv.

come to one unanimous decision to do His bidding—"Let us," they cry, "rise up and build."¹ Then each going to his own quarter sets to work to repair his own piece of the wall.² They have all one work, for it is the same one wall they all are building *and they know it*, though each has a differing sphere of labour, for each repairs his appointed portion.

At first, indeed, the many little pieces built were so small that a fox could have broken them down³ (if God had let him), but soon the labourers were encouraged by seeing the spaces between them begin to be filled up—the breaches began to be stopped⁴—till at last the wall was joined together, though only half the full height,⁵ for the people had a mind to work.

The principle of co-operation or fellowship in service is here most plainly pictured, especially in the further light of the provision for times of danger and difficulty. "In what place ye hear the sound of the trumpet resort ye thither unto us."⁶ For none of these builders had any personal interest in one part of the wall to the exclusion of their care for the whole; the wall was one, the work was of and for Jehovah, and the unity of the work was intelligently understood by all the workers together. They met with much and varied opposition. They were laughed at, they were despised, they were mocked, they were attacked by night, they were harassed in the day-time;⁷ but they patiently continued in well doing, and they had the blessing of God, which maketh rich. The watchman waked not in vain, for Jehovah watched the city.⁸ And the wall was finished in the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days.⁹

¹ Neh. ii. 18.² Neh. iv. 3.³ Neh. iv. 6, R.V.⁴ Neh. iv. 1, 3, 8, 21, 22.⁵ Neh. vi. 15.⁶ Neh. iii.⁷ Neh. iv. 7.⁸ Neh. iv. 20.⁹ Ps. cxxvii. 1.

With this work of building the wall we may connect also certain other zeal for God displayed at this time. Reverting briefly to the Book of Ezra, we notice at the end of the first six chapters the climax of the work of God in and through the first party that went up from Babylon to Jerusalem, who after much delay did at last rebuild the House, the Temple of Jehovah, when the emancipated children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month. For the Priests and Levites had purified themselves together, all of them were pure; . . . and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the nations of the land to seek Jehovah, Israel's God, did eat.¹

Contrast with this that which Ezra found when some sixty years later he arrived at Jerusalem. The people of Israel and the Priests and the Levites had not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands.² Now it is in the confession which Ezra makes to God of this great trespass that we first read of the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem³; and this is very significant, and we are therefore not surprised as we read on in the Book of Nehemiah to find that, having made provision in the wall with its gates and doors to keep out and to keep in such as God would have kept out or kept in, it next remained to deal with those who had previously been taking advantage of the unwallled state of the city to maintain associations that were not of God, but contrary to His will.

One of the first things then done was to go back to the genealogy of those who were gathered, with a view to identifying them by names and number.⁴ Then, as they had never done up to that time, they set themselves to hear and understand the law of their God."⁵ Then the people found it written in the law which Jehovah had commanded

¹ Ezra vi. 19-22.² Ezra ix. 1.³ Ezra ix. 9.⁴ Neh. vii.⁵ Neh. viii.

by Moses that they should dwell in booths; and in the feast of the seventh month they made themselves booths, though since the days of Joshua they had not done so.¹ Moreover, now was made evident that word, "Then shall we know if we follow on to know Jehovah,"² for next we read that the seed of Israel separated themselves from the sons of the stranger, and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers.³ Then follows a fresh list of names. Not now of such as had come out of Babylon into Jerusalem; that is, into a right position. But this list is of the leaders of those who separated themselves from the peoples of the lands unto the law of God, to walk in God's law, and to observe and to do *all* the commandments of Jehovah their Lord, and His judgment and His statutes, of such as were resolved not to have unholy intercourse with the peoples of the lands, or traffic with them outside the will of God.⁴ Later on we find that there still remained separation work to do, for they read that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God, and hearing this, they separated the mixed multitude from Israel.⁵ At such a time as this we read, with perhaps no little surprise, that the old enemy Tobiah had made friends with Eliashib, who had been prominent aforetime⁶ in the building of the wall, and induced him even to prepare for him a chamber in the House of God (as many a Tobiah has to-day); but the servant of God cares nought for Eliashib's friendships (seeing they are enmity with God⁷), and we read that he cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber.⁸

Now when we see the course of action pursued by Nehemiah in the circumstances in which he was, and com-

¹ Neh. viii. 14-18.

² Neh. ix. 1, 2.

³ Neh. xiii. 3.

⁴ Jas. iv. 4.

² Hos. vi. 3.

⁴ Neh. x.

⁶ Neh. iii. 1.

⁸ Neh. xiii. 4-9.

pare these with those which surround us to-day, is he not plainly an example for us to follow?—in his faithfulness to his God, in his fearlessness towards man, in the steadfastness of his purpose, in the unselfishness of his life; and can we fail to find therein fulfilment of that word, “Them that honour Me I will honour”?

And does not all this suggest, in part at least, an answer to the question propounded?

Is not the fellowship in which are embraced the assemblies of God almost unvalled to-day? Have we not therein a mixture of many whom God has never added together, of such as have never been really delivered from the system of human religion in which they have been brought up, and who are therefore a fruitful source of weakness in such fellowship? Indeed, there are those in companies supposed to be assemblies of God to whom the very name of separation is as the sound of an unknown tongue, or as the tone of an enemy’s speech, whose sympathy and whose intercourse with the sects of Christendom are as complete as are the sympathy and the intercourse of the sects with one another, and who confessedly have no thought of occupying a position of subjection to the Lord in any sense different to that vague and nominal submission which the lip-service of all so-called Christian communities is accustomed to profess.

By power is generally meant strength to act, and if power in assemblies means strength to do the will of the Lord, it surely cannot be looked for where there are many who lack the very desire to know and do that will.

When it becomes a question of how can we be freed from those who care not for the will of God without separating from many who earnestly desire to do the right thing, we come upon a difficulty that we would by no means underestimate.

This much we now say in conclusion. Nothing is more likely to hinder the work of God in this matter than hasty

action by individuals, or isolated assemblies, or groups of assemblies. No means that we can use to ensure God's help are more desirable than the seeking of counsel in all such difficulties with the very largest circle of overseeing men that the circumstances of the case will allow—and not seeking *counsel* merely, but taking no steps except in actual real fellowship with the largest available circle of those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

(C. M. L.)

JOTTINGS ON THE EPISTLE TO TITUS.

PART II.

“FOR the grace of God.” What tongue or pen of man may fitly expound this most captivating theme! Great and marvellous have been the trophies thereof. Few of those would claim to have been more than unprofitable and ungrateful in the opportunity of their one life to reciprocate and thus to manifest this grace to others. Yet, thanks be unto God that “Grace and Truth” have come by

JESUS CHRIST.

This fact may therefore cause every man to be interested, and saints to be ravished with delight in meditation on such a subject.

In the Holy Scriptures which record the wondrous life of the man

CHRIST JESUS

are set forth the far-reachings of this grace of God. Gathering into sequent sentences what the Scriptures do testify will afford some fitting comprehension of the breadth and length, the depth and height of the goodness and the mercy there is for all men in the grace of God that bringeth salvation to them. Ay! indeed! these sayings of God do show how full and how free that grace hath shined forth! The great Teacher Himself laid the keen edge of the axe of the truth that is as the life of the “true grace of God” when He asked,—

“If ye love them that love you, what *grace* have you?” Here, then, is the goodly seed that germinating has yielded the luscious fruit—the *grace* of God.

He loved and loves them that loved and love Him not! Who is there that has heard of this grace so unmovedly that

he has not felt bestirred to know whether indeed it is for him? Believing that the many and needy shall be reached by our pages, we would for their sake cast our bread as upon the waters, longing to find it in the multiplication of the after days that follow sowing. For,

“ Here our willing soul would stay,
To sit and sing herself away.”

The well-known words in the gospel of Christ according to John afford tenterhooks whereon to stretch and display this principle of grace. As to its

BREADTH:—

“ For God so loved the world ”—which words are as living waters reaching to the ankles in the goings and leadings forth of the Saviour God. Behold its

LENGTH:—

“ That He gave His only begotten Son ! ”—lo, here, these waters rise to the knees. See its

DEPTH:—

“ That whosoever believeth in Him,” which brings us even to waters to the loins. And its

HEIGHT:—

“ Should not perish, but have everlasting life,” which is as waters risen—waters to swim in, a river that cannot be passed over.¹

O, reader! be saved; this grace is free.
Yes; now believe it is for thee!

For by grace *through faith* is the way that leads into the truth and makes the believing one to possess that life which God is pleased to give as a free GIFT.

“ The grace of God disciplineth us.” Here it is no longer men in general, but us, even we ourselves as distinguished

¹ Ezek. xlvii, 1-6.

from all men to whom that grace hath shined forth bringing salvation.

There, indeed, that grace reached us. Now, its business or work with us is to *train us up as children*—such is the meaning of the word translated “teaching” here in the Authorised Version. That training or discipline is a continuous work! Have not too many misunderstood this? having failed or neglected to go on learning as that grace has sought to instruct—speaking to us

AS TO SONS!

The purpose of that disciplining us is that denying ungodliness and worldly desires we might live worthy of this mercy that so cares for us. That denying is also continuous! Moreover, if it is to be done at all we must make it our individual business to do it. Otherwise, children of God though we be, it is impossible that we can live soberly and righteously and godly in the present age. We may, indeed, live a life that is negatively pleasing and passable among men. But to have a sobriety sustained by righteousness, and righteousness that gives character to godliness, we cannot. Is not the denying of ungodliness to be done with our whole spirit? just as denying worldly desires is to be done with our whole soul, agreeably to which we shall be found sober as to the manner of our spirit, righteous as to the desires of our soul, and godly in our body manifestations. Withal showing plainly that we are looking for the blessed hope—*i.e.*, the Lord Himself coming *for* us: looking also for the outshining of the glory of the great God and Saviour of us, Jesus Christ—*i.e.*, His coming *with* us.

This, too, we shall do in the consciousness that He gave Himself for us, which, remark, please, is not so much for our need in the matter of our sins.¹ Here it is that He gave Himself for us that He might *redeem*—that is, having bought

¹ As to which see Gal. i. 4.

and made us His own, that He might further, as His own, loose us and let us go away from

ALL LAWLESSNESS.

The word "all" here is in the sense, not of the aggregate, but of the individual doings which compose lawlessness. As those made free by Him, He would cleanse us

TO HIMSELF,

as a people whom He hath acquired and made *zealous*—not patronizers, nor even admirers, but real zealots—of, and in, beautiful works.

How fitting the injunction! These things speak and exhort and convict by, with all commandment, taking care that no one looking around you may have just cause to think lightly of you who thus do; lest, indeed, you are as one that mocks them to whom you speak, because of your manner of life being contradictory to what you say.

That fellow-saints are to be reminded that it becomes them to be under orderly arrangement to Rulers and Authorities shows fully that saints should *not be of such!* Indeed, any child of God who will be, or is, of those here named "Rulers and Authorities" is without any direction from his God as to how he ought to conduct or behave himself in these positions, while direction for every other sphere that has God's approval is most fully given in New Testament pages. If any will seek warrant and guidance from Old Testament pages, let them know that all the Old Testament is to be heard, learned, and obeyed in the light of that which God has written *again*. Whence, in the matter of rule among men, as men, the order from God to those who are His is, "Be ye subject to kings and authorities as also to their ordinances through the Lord." Besides which, it becomes us to be prepared to every good work, as to which see Ephesians ii. 10.

Remembering that once we ourselves were foolish, dis-

obedient, deceived, enslaved by various desires and pleasures, conducting ourselves in malice and self-seeking, hateful and hating one another, we should compassionate those who yet are so, bear much at their hands, and pray constantly for them.

Now that the kindness and philanthropy of God toward man has shone forth, let us be careful not to speak evil of any one, to be no fighters, but rather be gentle, exemplifying meekness to all men. These things too let us be diligent to manifest, not as if by works of righteousness which we have done, or could do, we are saved, but because by the mercy of God

HE SAVED US.

These words declare a past, an accomplished, an eternally abiding fact which nothing and no one can alter. Still, He saved us *through*, or by means of (the) laver of *birth-again* (born-again) and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that we, having been justified by His grace, should become heirs according to hope of eternal life.

Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil whither the Fore-runner is FOR US entered, even Jesus. Hallelujah!

"For such is His mind
He'll not be in glory and leave us behind."

We call most special and serious attention to the truth that neither the re-generation nor the renewing are progressive or continuous unto being possibly or actually accomplished in a time to come, as some daring tamperers with the Word of God assert, who also teach and scatter broadly similar destructive heresies that are but refuges of lies. Regeneration and renewing are the *definition* or explanation of how, not by works of righteousness which we have done,

but according to His mercy, God saved us. Faithful is the word, and these things it is desirable we constantly seek to establish, that they who have believed God (no word "in"—see R.V.) should be careful, mindful, thoughtful to maintain (that is, set forth in the presence of others) beautiful works. These are good and profitable to men. But foolish questions, genealogies, strifes, and contentions about law avoid, for they are unprofitable and vain.

Opposers of the Faith, who seek to seduce therefrom or to co-operate with God's people contrary to the Lord's mind, use these very words to harass or to attract, to bind or to strangle, such as will only be moulded by the Book of God in its word of truth rightly divided as to the work and workers they should help and be engaged with.

A self-choosing rather than God-ordered, and therefore a factious man, after a first and second warning, is to be refused or avoided. The word here translated "refuse" has been laid hold of by some who would fain weaken if they cannot hinder the discipline of grace. A simple illustration of its meaning and use in practical godliness is given us in 1 Timothy v. There such cases as those of elderly widows, needy and worthy, are provided for. Then the question rises, What about widows that are not elderly, what about the younger ones? Concerning these the Apostle says they are to be refused. That is to say, while elderly widows answering to the description given are to be taken into the number for whom the church is wholly to provide, the younger widows are not to be taken into that number.

Apply this to the heretic man and see where, as regards the number of names that together form a church of God in a given place, refusal puts him. Is it not even out from and not of such, not being in their number?

That we may not err in determining such a person and carrying out such sore discipline, we are called to know them as being really subverted—that is, turned out from or

away from "the Faith," and that is a divine whole. Their subversion is manifested by their continuing in a path of *present sinning*. Therefore are they, by the things they hold or teach, countenance or practise, self-condemned. Surely here is fulfilled the word, "Happy is he that judges not himself in that which he alloweth."

Verses 12 and 13 show the care that should be taken of such as serve in the path of the fellowship of the Faith.

Verse 14 is a parting word as to those who are ours being careful TO LEARN to manifest as setting forth before others beautiful works for necessary needs. Lest otherwise they be unfruitful. Alas! that so many naming the name of the Lord seem to think they need not so learn. Hence want is commensurate with wealth, as also much else that ought not so to be; ay! and that would not be if these things were known and done by us that answer to "Those that are ours."

Becoming salutations are sent to the individual and to all loving in faith the Apostle and those with him. And all crowned with the wishful prayer that grace might be with all.

The subscription as to Titus being ordained the first bishop of the church of the Cretans has no part in the message from God to us, as the Revised Version shows.

Nor could such be, since all Scripture shows that no such ordinations were ever carried through in the churches of God of early day. Neither are they done in churches of God in present day. Whereas any company so doing are by the Scriptures convicted of having no word of God for that they do.

Because of which let God be heard, learned, and obeyed; then shall the "Born-again" come out from such, even going forth unto Him without the camp, to serve alone the Lord Christ (Rom. xvi. 17-20, R.V.).

JOHN BROWN.

SEPARATION—UNITY.

It is our joy to remember that our Lord Jesus Christ has gone up to the throne of God with a heart full of purpose and promise, a purpose so fixed and a promise so sure that, though nearly 2,000 years have passed since He said, "I will come again," faith and hope look up, expecting fully the complete fulfilment of the promise and the accomplishment of all He has promised, for "He is faithful that promised," and "He that shall come . . . will not tarry."

But He has gone up to the throne of God with a heart full of desires also, and we know something of these desires from the few utterances on earth (John xvii.), which, while directed upward to the ears of the Father, are yet recorded for the memories and hearts of His people to treasure through the night of our waiting here. Desires which run on to the utmost limit of His absence; and as the breast-plate of Aaron spanned the whole of Israel (Exod. xxviii.), so the intercession of our Great Priest takes in His whole church—"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which believe on Me through their word."

Let but that promise and those desires be thought of as *His* and the heart of the disciple knows no higher motive to move it, and no grander nor nobler employment to engage it, than the endeavour to gratify the wishes of its Lord. "For Christ's sake" (2 Cor. xii.) gives pleasure amid scenes adverse to the natural man, as indeed it accounts but dung and dross all that the man of nature looks upon as gain and glory (Phil. iii.).

Looking through the present of His people here, His desires are "Keep them," "Sanctify them," "That they all may be one." Looking beyond—"With Me where I am, that they may behold My glory." Kept from evil, set apart to

God, united as one precious threefold cord of grace and of blessing. "With Me" (the company), "Where I am" (the place), "Behold My glory" (the occupation)—glorious threefold anticipation of oh! how near a future!

"Gather My saints together unto Me" (Ps. l.) was the language of the God of Israel; but before this He had said, "Sanctify unto Me all the firstborn" (Exod. xiii.). He delivered and brought out (Exod. xii.) the people, and sanctified them (Exod. xxxi. 13), that He might dwell among them as gathered unto Him. Redemption, separation, the union of a gathered people to God, became their happy experience, as it was, indeed the will of God concerning them. Separation and unity became the conspicuous characteristics of God's dealings with that His first people. "Bringing them out," "Unto Me," the comprehensive language to describe their position.

Nearly 1,000 years after that bringing out and that gathering together came another crisis in the history of Israel (see Ezra), similar, though far smaller in its scope. Similar, for it was a coming out and a coming together, smaller, for less than 50,000 in a remnant character responded to the work of God among them, though others afterward were added to these, and joined them in the outside place. And yet how sadly unlike the first exodus, in that, then, not a hoof was left behind; now, a portion only are concerned to go forth from Babylon, but God had raised their spirit to go up, to build, etc. (chap. i. 5), and in that lay the secret of the disposition to brave the difficulties and foes ahead, even as perhaps it helped them to overcome the force of nature's ties and friendships and selfish considerations bound up in the seventy years' sojourn in Babylon. "OUT" is the keyword of chapter ii. "TOGETHER" the word that opens chapter iii. "Out of the captivity" (chap. ii. 1). What a burden gone! what a liberty felt! and yet what a reflection! rivers of Babylon and harps on willows—sad

memories of lost praise and lost joys beneath the chastening hand of God (2 Chron. xxxvi. 16). And what surroundings to contemplate!—a ruined city, a burned house. But God had raised the spirit, and He alone could do it in such a way as to bring them out and gather them together “as one,” to build the altar, offer, as written in the law, set forward the work of the house, and sing and shout for joy. Separation and unity, seen in the remnant history, as previously in that of the nation, give further emphasis to the ways of God with His people.

The close of the remnant’s days was a repetition of the sad end of the national downfall. A house “desolate,” Jerusalem trodden under foot of the Gentile, a dispersion more widespread and troubles unparalleled in their history coming upon them, even as their sin had been unsurpassed in all their previous record. They had, as a nation, resisted the patience and works of God by His prophets (2 Chron.), they now had spurned it as declared by His Son, and as their fathers had murdered those whom God had sent, so they killed the Prince of life and glory. But ere the verdict against Israel received its fulfilment Jerusalem is the scene of another display of divine grace and purpose (see Acts ii.) The Holy Spirit from heaven giving testimony to the person and work of Christ, subdues 3,000 rebel hearts and wills to Him as Saviour, and then, ay, the same day, 3,000 hearts and wills of saved ones to Him as Lord (ver. 41); “Save yourselves from this untoward generation” (ver. 40); “The same day . . . added” (ver. 41); “All that believed were together” (ver. 44); “The Lord added together” (ver. 47, R.V.); showing as distinctly, as separation and unity were the prominent features of God’s dealings with Israel, so now with the church. A separation becoming more and more distinct and emphatic as the “House of Israel” became more and more hostile: a unity beginning at Jerusalem (chap. ii.), extending throughout all Judæa, Galilee, and

Samaria (Acts ix. 31, R.V.). "Then had the church rest," and growing still, united all the Gentile churches with Antioch (chap. xiv. 23-27), even as Antioch had been linked with Jerusalem (see chap. xi. 22), first through means of the dispersion, and then through the sending of Barnabas; and so churches of Gentiles and churches of Judæa became linked together like the two sets of tabernacle curtains by the golden taches. But as Israel's national exodus and unity was followed by a remnant separation and coming together, even so there is in these last days a remnant number standing in similar relation to the church of the Acts (see 2 Tim. ii.).

"Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity" (ver. 19). "If a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour" (ver. 21). But separation is not isolation, and therefore is added, "Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." Separation and unity go on to the end. It is the same principle on which God acts both with Israel and the church. In first days of mighty deliverance, as in Exodus xii. and Acts ii., and in later times of apostasy and weakness—Ezra, 2 Timothy ii.

Now, as it is, and ever has been, the purpose and desire of God to have a separated people, it has been the object of Satan to prevent such separation, and when that could not be, to minimize it and make it as small and as indistinct a thing as could be.

"Neither will I let Israel go," is the first utterance of the enemy in rage (Exod. v. 2). "Only ye shall not go very far away" (Exod. viii. 28), the suggestion of a baffled foe. Both words tell of Satan's tactics throughout. Shall not go, if possible; if that cannot be, then don't go very far. Alas! that many delivered in redemption by the power of God from the hand of the enemy can listen to Satan's advice, as their worldliness of home and business testify on the one

hand, or when perhaps this is not so marked, then in the joining in sectarian ways, mixing up with the ungodly systems of men, and though professedly out to the Name, in heart and often in ways going back to the nice sermon and beautiful singing, like Israel to the flesh-pots of Egypt.

“Ye shall not go very far away,” is what Satan still says. “We will go three days’ journey into the wilderness,” is the decisive utterance of faith; “We will go, and go out thoroughly, we will have a clean cut,”—such is the resolve of hearts who have felt the power of the Cross of Christ (Gal. v.), and know themselves, the resurrection side of it (suggested by the three days’ journey). The voice of the Spirit of God says—1st, “Come out”; 2nd, “Be separate”; 3rd, “Touch not” (2 Cor. vi.)

And so with the unity. The adversary will weaken and mar it, or give a sham in its place—a platform where “Church” and “Dissent” may congratulate each other, and Denominationalism, in its various representatives, keep back its own distinctive tenets in so-called “Christian liberality,” and at the same time make room for “modern thought.” And this is unity!—the county union, the denominational union—rather call it a crowd, which only the exigencies of the passing hour keep together, like that of a number of sightseers around a broken barrow, who disperse to their opposite pursuits the moment the circumstances that drew them together pass away. More subtle still the conference of Christians, which link together the clergy with some of those who professedly are gathered to the Name, of course putting the reverend gentlemen first, thus sanctioning the superiority of the clergy to the laity, and making light of the sin of clerisy. Is this considered a mere imagination? Then let me say, before me lies a bill announcing a conference in a well known hall, where a number meet who profess to be gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This bill announces four meetings,

at which six reverend gentlemen are to speak, with several other gentlemen (who come together to break bread on the first day of the week, having professedly judged the systems which support clerisy as a sinful thing), a chairman to each meeting completing the resemblance to sectarianism. A spectacle of "liberality" yes, but a liberality that exists at the expense of truth and faithfulness.

When we turn to the Scriptures for guidance as to unity, we find three marks whereby divine unity may be discerned: 1st, a God-given centre—"Where two or three are gathered together into My Name, there am I in the midst of them." 2nd, The authority of the Lord Jesus Christ—"I beseech you by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ that ye all speak the same thing," etc. (1 Cor. i. 10). 3rd, Separation from evil—"Purge himself from these, . . . but follow . . . with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Tim. ii. 21, 22).

Such are the words to guide us in our associations and to the practical unity which is of God, and this threefold character cannot be found in the unities of man. The authority of the Lord Jesus is displaced by human arrangements, the truth is shut out in consideration of everybody's feelings, and a centre accepted to which all may rally, without fear of disturbing any. As one has well said, "Latitudinarian unity, it may be painful and trying to keep aloof from: it has an amiable form in general, is in measure respectable in the religious world, tries nobody's conscience, and allows of everybody's will."

CHARLES MORTON.

GRACE AND TRUTH.

(John i. 1-18).

“No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him”—told Him out. Such is the testimony to the life of the Lord Jesus given by the Holy Spirit after He had ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high. He came to tell out the heart of God to men, and from “the bosom of the Father” He declared His words and wrought His works. In that especial place of nearness He could always know the thoughts of His Father, and only found delight in giving them expression. His life is epitomised in one sentence—“He told Him out.”

This representation of God was dual in character—Grace and Truth; and those who have received out of His fulness are invited to behold in Him “the brightness of His glory and the exact expression of His substance,” in striking contrast to the Law engraven in cold tablets of stone.

But the Spirit is also careful to note the reception the Lord Jesus had from men—first from the world, then from Israel: “He was in the world, and the world knew Him not,” is His testimony as to the former; while “He came to His own (possessions), but His own (people) received Him not,” His verdict as to the latter. The world in its darkness could not discern “the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus,” teaching us that by nature we cannot attain to even a single thought that is really divine. Israel in their apostasy from God, boasting in their position at Jerusalem, with its Temple and its ordinances, though having the Word of God in their hands, failed to see in Him their Messiah. How deeply solemn this is, for as it was then so it may be to-day. In this God would remind us that to

have, not only an accurate, but a spiritual apprehension of the mind of Christ, we must be absolutely dependent upon the teaching of the Holy Spirit, for "what man knoweth the things of a man, except the spirit of man that is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man (or, none hath known) except the Spirit of God. But we have received the Spirit which is of God."¹

In the Gospels are recorded some of the words and works that together comprise the life which was so precious to God. Those words and actions became imprinted on the hearts of the little company of fishermen and others who followed Him through good and bad report, and after many years they not only retained their fragrance, but with further revelation they unfolded the thoughts and purposes of God, enabling those men to set to their seal that God was true, and to place on record a testimony in sharp contrast to that of Israel,—“We beheld His glory, the glory as of an only begotten of the Father, *full of Grace and Truth.*” Should any inquire, Who made them to differ? the answer is furnished by Christ Himself,—“Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven.”

One of the first questions that suggests itself to a student of the Gospel is, How could the Jews so thoroughly misunderstand Christ when in every point He conformed to the pattern set out in the Law? That they were conversant with the Scriptures is beyond doubt, for on many occasions they displayed a knowledge of the Law which, if rightly interpreted, would have led to an entirely different result. It seems probable that along with the gradual corruption of the Law and the concurrent introduction of the “tradition of the elders,” sets of ideas, originating with the various schools of thought, found acceptance among the people as

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 11, 12.

interpretations of Scripture, so that their minds became so darkened to the counsel of God that they, even with their knowledge of Scripture, fulfilled the word of Isaiah: "When we shall see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him." Thus, head and heart being entirely estranged from God, Satan effectually accomplished his purpose in the rejection of Christ, through the ignorance of the people.

All this is worthy of attention now, for with a patient waiting upon God for the interpretation of Scripture there must be a willingness to have the mind and the thoughts readjusted as to the things of God. When we trusted in Christ our former ideas of salvation for ever vanished; and when later we were instructed in the truths of Baptism and gathering to the Name of the Lord, we again had to dispense with certain conceptions, many of which were associated with names justly honoured in ecclesiastical history. For some years back many have found that even in a *right* position ideas, which have been regarded as interpretations of certain scriptures, and received and acted upon as such, have, upon examination, been found to be only human theories (though they were backed up by all the prestige that age and experience give), and have thus discovered that correct ideas of either grace or truth are only to be found in a *spiritual apprehension of the will of the Lord*.

The familiar passage in Luke iv. 16-30 furnishes an example of this. The Lord had returned to Nazareth, and, as was His custom, He entered the synagogue and stood up to read. Having selected the portion from the Prophet Isaiah which foretold His mission to men, and declared it fulfilled in their hearing, He commanded the attention of the entire audience. Every eye was fixed upon Him, and every ear intent to hear as the words of grace (not gracious words) fell from His lips, until He reminded them of certain truths, which entirely changed their deportment. Expres-

sions of wonder gave place to cries of anger, and as one man they rose in wrath to thrust Him over the brow of the hill. If His action was to be judged by what is popularly taught as to grace, the conclusion would be forced upon us that He "spoiled a good meeting," especially as there is no reason given why He acted thus. But from "the bosom of the Father" He spake what was right, and thus manifested the real condition of the people, and revealed that they, like many who have succeeded them, even when completely out of harmony with the purposes of God, were prepared to accept the grace, but reject the truth.

The story of Nicodemus, the woman of Sychar, and others furnish living illustrations of this unique administration of grace and truth. Speaking at all times the "word in season," whether the word of compassion to the needy sinner or of rebuke to the proud Pharisee, it could find no response in that which was natural. Grace could share the sorrows of the home of Bethany and the joys of the marriage of Cana; it remembered the temporal need of the thousands who came to hear the word, and had abundant pity for the widow of Nain, and for others in their several distresses. But as for those who resisted the counsels of God the withering denunciations of truth ploughed their consciences and exposed their sin and corruption to the light of day; hence the bitter hatred manifested by those who were the religious guides of the people, which culminated in their nailing the Son of God to the cross.

God's truth was not acceptable even to God's people, because their will was not subjected to His, and thus the path of the Lord became so narrow, His followers so few, that when the last Passover was kept which commanded the smile of Jehovah, then were found only eleven in sympathy with Him. Misunderstood and rejected by those dearest to Him on earth, He could say to His Father, "I am become a stranger to My brethren and an alien unto My

mother's children. For the zeal of Thine House hath eaten Me up." ¹

We would commend this scripture to the attention of those who seem to delight in stigmatizing the truth affecting the corporate testimony of the saints as "dry doctrines," etc. Would they apply the same epithets to that zeal for the honour of the House of God which so markedly characterized the life of the Lord Jesus? Notwithstanding the reproaches which were levelled at Him, He maintained an unflinching testimony for the Truth, the oppositions to which ultimately caused him to hand over the house to those whose wills had so long been paramount therein. "Your house is left unto you desolate." ²

One prominent feature in His ministry was the absence of everything that would appeal to human sentiment. As this is so frequently mistaken for Divine grace, we would point out that the Word of God alone can discriminate between soul and spirit—*i.e.*, that which is *natural* and that which is *spiritual*; and as many voices clamour for that which passes for "grace" or "love," but which, upon examination, is seen to be derogatory to the truth, let us remember that anything that detracts from the value of truth cannot be grace, however plausible it may appear.

Testimony to the truth will lead saints outside the camp to bear the reproach of their rejected Lord, and to do His will dependent upon His grace: but as the grace of Christ never countenanced the corruption of God's ordinances, let them see that they are not beguiled by pious platitudes and sentimental theories from their simplicity (singleness) towards Christ.

W. LAING.

¹ Psalm lxix. 8, 9.

² Matt. xxiii. 38.

FELLOWSHIP OR INDEPENDENCY—WHICH?

WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES TEACH?

Lessons from the Book of Judges—See chapters xvii. to xxi.

THERE is divine significance in the fact that these chapters are thus side by side at the end of Judges, for we may surely gather that the events of chapters xix.-xxi. did not immediately follow those of chapters xvii. and xviii. The order is therefore moral. The more important first, as in the Corinthian letters, as to which I fear, had we had the work of writing it, that our commencement would have been with chapter v.; but the order of the Spirit of God is to put first the four chapters which lead back to the place where they could act together in the name and with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 4).

Of the two central events in these chapters in Judges, the one was a deep and daring ecclesiastical sin against God—Micah and his house of gods (xvii. 5), which idolatry developed into that of a tribe (Dan); the other was an outrage and moral wrong done in Gibeah of Benjamin—of a most shocking and revolting kind: and this was keenly felt and thoroughly judged by Israel, it being to their dishonour; but in the case of Micah and his gods, and the terrible dishonour done to Jehovah, there was not the slightest manifestation of either heart or conscience—no movement, no protest. The tribe of Dan, who stole Micah's gods and made the idolatrous worship their own, was as loud in its condemnation and as vigorous in its onslaught on Benjamin as any other tribe, but never touched its own far deeper evil. The one affected God, the other themselves; and so to-day there are crusades against every form of moral evil—the many aggressive agencies against drink, gambling, swearing, impurity, vice of every kind and degree, and

that too, like Dan, by men most prominent in the greater ecclesiastical sin against God of unscriptural sectarian position, with its present-day denial of the inspiration of Scripture—unitarianism, and non-eternity of punishment. Against this not the slightest protest, or if not altogether silent, the cry is generally feeble and the protest weak.

Some time ago the world had its saying, "Peace with honour," which we may aptly borrow and apply to the things of God and His Christ; for there can be a most criminal peace instead of, as Bunyan has it, a "Holy War." The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit—a peace and joy based on righteousness; and we must condemn unsparingly the iniquitous peace with the ecclesiastical sin of Micah and Dan; while at the same time we go with Israel in its unsparing judgment of Benjamin, from which we would gather wholesome lessons for our New Testament days, bearing in mind the scripture that "whatsoever was written aforetime was written for our learning" (Rom. xv. 4), and as a safeguard with respect to our Old Testament interpretation, let us have a New Testament scripture for our application of the Old.

The twofold defeat and terrible losses to Israel lay in the manner of acting. They made the matter so completely their own, a question of shame and dishonour to them, instead of dishonour to God. Gathering at Mizpeh, they made their plans, laid down precisely how they would act (xx. 8 to 10), what "we will do"; and then, in ver. 18, they come to ask "counsel of God" as to who shall go up first. With their mind made up they ask counsel of God. The result is defeat; and again (ver. 22) they repeat the thing—again defeat; but the third time—no plans, no will, no schemes: ver. 28—"Shall I go, or shall I cease?" not "We will" go, but "*Shall I go?*" How they mourned and wept before God! They had only seen in the place of distance, as it were, the *children of Benjamin*, but now it is the

children of Benjamin "*my brother.*" When they thus mourned and wept, linking themselves with Benjamin in relationship, and so as *all* Israel, making the sin their own, God came in and gave deliverance and victory. The order of responsibility was first Gibeah, then Benjamin, but now all Israel. Seeing wherein they are to be shunned, let us see wherein they are to be followed, for here are lessons with regard to sin in an assembly, whether ecclesiastical or moral, the order is still the same: first the guilty ones themselves; failing this, the assembly; failing this, the fellowship which embraces *all assemblies*, as Israel embraced all the tribes.

They gathered as one man to the Lord at Mizpeh, and made most diligent inquiry as to the case (xx. 3). Not a mere report or supposition, and acting on *hearsay*, a piece of gossip, but according to Deuteronomy xvii. 2 to 7, also 1 Timothy v. 20, 22. Most essential this: how much of needless sorrow would be spared were this the first step! "Then," and not till then, is anything done in the matter of the ascertained wrong. But notice what is done, and how it is done. Benjamin is approached by *all* the tribes in the persons of "sent men" (xx. 12). These did not go as individuals, but went from and for the tribes, representing them, as we see in the case of Antioch in Acts xv. The apostles must needs go to Jerusalem about this matter, and certain others with them, being men sent from Antioch, for they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain others of them, should go up to Jerusalem; and on returning they gather the multitude together (xv. 30), who rejoiced for the consolation. In the present state of things some half a dozen irresponsible individuals too commonly are called together, and the matter is settled. Not so these *sent men*: these go in and out amongst the tribe of Benjamin, and firmly but patiently entreat that these men, even the guilty ones of Gibeah, be delivered up; that together we may put away the evil

from *Israel*. It has developed into the sin of all: it was Gibeah, then Benjamin, now all Israel. Had the sin been judged and put away by Gibeah, it would have ended there: the laxity of the tribe of Benjamin has necessitated this stronger measure and protest. What response does Benjamin make? 26,000 of the fighting men are gathered at Gibeah; is it to demand that the men be delivered up, surrounding their city, lest they escape? Alas! no; but to defend Gibeah. It cannot be that Benjamin can countenance such a crime. Then how can we account for their determined action; for not only to defend Gibeah are they gathered, but to make a most determined onslaught on Israel. There seems only one solution—viz. to *resent as interference* the action of the tribes. But was it such? From Dan to Beersheba they were *one*. In the matter of Achan, God said, Israel hath sinned, and not till Achan by *all* Israel had been stoned was the sin put away. All Israel kept the passover—one in privilege, one in responsibility. Have neighbouring tribes no voice, no care, no obligation to God? Benjamin will soon know to their bitter cost that they have.

An assembly in which non-eternity is allowed failing to judge its own sin, have neighbouring assemblies no voice, no responsibility? "Am I my brother's keeper?" is the outcry of a guilty but stifled conscience. Are not neighbouring assemblies in the fellowship? Does not privilege and responsibility of such a fellowship reach unto them? Verily, it does; and if such sin in such assembly goes unjudged we must take sides with God and say they are *partakers* of their evil deeds, and dare not go on modern lines, and say they are individually clear of it. A partner in a business house, himself, it may be, seeking to maintain principles of honesty, is, while in that partnership, a partaker of any and all the lying and cheating of the firm, if, when he knows of such, he remains in it.

Now we see in chapter xxi. 8 the action, or rather lack of action, on the part of Jabesh-Gilead. There is an inquiry, "Who came not up?" and it was found Jabesh-Gilead came not up: there was war elsewhere, but here peace. Had there been war it had been to the honour of those who so contended and so fought; but these false ideas of independency that prevail hinder all discipline and warp and cripple all true ideas of ministry.

If the places are traced on the map, it will be found that Jabesh-Gilead is fifty-four miles away from Gibeah, and belongs to the tribe of Gad; and so probably would seek, on the ground of distance, to excuse itself from any responsibility as to a place so far remote as Gibeah, *fifty-four* miles away. That might have been so while it remained limited to Gibeah or Benjamin; but when it widened to be that of *all* Israel, they as in that *ALL* must rise to the occasion. But no; *neutrality* was their policy, of which God knows nothing. "He that is not *for Me* is against *Me*," and Jabesh-Gilead suffers the fate of Benjamin and Gibeah.

Now let us see a town or city in which there are twelve (or more) assemblies, and you may say of each that it is of the assembly of God. But we ask, Which is "the assembly of God"? The reply is, to get the assembly of God you must see the whole number of God-gathered saints in that town or city, and to leave out one such assembly you would fail to see that which composed "the assembly." When the apostles returned to Antioch they called together the *multitude* of the believers. How many local companies would be represented in this multitude does not appear; but to suppose that this multitude assembled under one roof is absurd. But whether one large company or many smaller ones, it remained still the church in Antioch, in which church there ministered prophets and teachers at least to the number of five (Acts xiii. 1).

In Acts ix. 21 (A.V.), through an imperfect rendering, we

do not see the far-reaching extent to which the expression "Church" applies. In this case it embraces gathered saints scattered throughout all Judæa, Galilee, and Samaria, for (see Newbery and R.V.) it reads: Then had the church rest, . . . *was* edified and *was* multiplied; so that, as all Israel reached from Dan to Beersheba, so we have the church as far-reaching. This does not in the least disturb the fact of their being "churches," as in Galatians ii. 22. Whatever there be of gift in one assembly does not belong to that particular one, but to *all*. These five of Acts. xiii. 1 ministered in the church at Antioch. Let us again come to a town or neighbourhood in which there are twelve assemblies—a brother taught of God and teaching saints, known and acknowledged as such, locally in one assembly of the twelve. He is responsible, so far as in him lies, to reach out unto *all* the twelve gatherings of God's saints. Other duties there are, such as business and family claims, not by any means to be neglected; so we say as far as in him lies let such an one know the claims of neighbouring assemblies, together one church. And not only is such an one to minister, but such assemblies are to gladly receive such. This is often lost sight of. There are many places with assemblies only two miles apart, and so far as any practical oneness is owned they might be 150 miles apart; for to receive from each other (which would be done with the more distant) is about all there is between them. In the face of this truth let an assembly take independent position and contend for it—which is done even when the awfully serious matter of non-eternity is involved—and what have you got but sectarianism pure and simple, and the ministry in such assembly is little better than clerisy, and in some cases no better at all; for *it* does not belong to the *whole* as *they* do not belong to the *whole*. It is their meeting and their ministry, differing in some respects as to order. It may not be the paid official, the "Rev. —," but it is that which belongs

to them, just as much as the Baptist and others can boast of theirs; and brethren who minister feel no responsibility outside the four walls of their own hall or room. From such irresponsible companies of independent assemblies, who contend for and maintain such a place, we should "turn away," for we must occupy a church or assembly position, according to God and His word. Such companies do not go beyond a recognition of each other, by no means reaching unto fellowship. There are companies of saints who know nothing of such isolation, and who feebly apprehend there is yet a oneness and a fellowship by them not attained. Most gladly would we seek to help on such in the ways which be in Christ, and who as gladly and thankfully respond to such an expression of fellowship.

Loud and bitter may be the cry of independency, and Benjamin, like many, may deem such help an interference, either as to discipline in the matter of non-eternity or in the matter of ministry. As in a small meeting in which a brother ministered, it was thought they did not need the ministry of a neighbouring assembly, as they could very well manage, and fellowship was so completely discouraged that it was made very evident that they were not wanted.

Now we see in Corinthians and Timothy that which relates to Corinth and Ephesus, the former with its moral, the other with its ecclesiastical wrong, how unsparingly did the saints at Corinth deal with the fornicator, and with the apostle put away the one whom he had delivered over to Satan, but how tardy and slack were those of Ephesus in the matter of the false teachers, who were also delivered unto Satan, for on they went, their word still eating its deadly way, until the godly ones had to depart from it as iniquity, and follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace with them that called on the Lord out of a pure heart (1 Tim. i. 3, 19, 20; 2 Tim. ii. 15-22).

Correspondence Department.

“Hearken to me,

I will answer also my part.”

—Job xxxii. 10, 17.

Dear brethren,—

In the paper by A. P. M. in No. 7 of *Needed Truth* on The Fellowship of Assemblies it is stated on page 99 that each rendering of the Greek when allusion is made to a company of gathered saints meeting at a particular address in the city wherein they dwelt is AT the house, and in no case IN the house.

I have the Revised Version, the Englishman's Bible, Tischendorf's Version, and R. Young's Version, and only in one instance—that is, R. Young's Version, Romans xvi. 5—is the translation given AT the house. I therefore ask for confirmation of A. P. M.'s paper on that point.

I value the paper exceedingly, am thankful for it, and am profited by it, and if the rendering I refer to is correct I shall use it for the future, but I feel I need confirmation ere accepting it, seeing other authorities make no emendation.—T. D.

[Our correspondent has not quite apprehended the point urged by A. P. M. in the article referred to.

Briefly stated, that point is that God in His Word uses different expressions when referring (1) to the assembly IN a given town, comprising all the saints gathered to the Name of the Lord resident therein, however large in number; and (2) to a local company, forming a part of that one assembly, and meeting regularly *in* or *at* some particular place in that given town.

This is a statement of fact that cannot be gainsaid, and A. P. M. furnished conclusive proof of it by quoting the two different Greek prepositions employed in the respective cases—*ἐν* (en), in (1), *κατά* (kata), in (2); so that any person with a knowledge of the Greek alphabet only may verify it for himself.

The only question that remains, therefore, is as to the most exact equivalent to this use of the preposition *κατά* which the English language furnishes.

Used thus¹ (with an accusative of place) it denotes the relation of

¹ There is a *distributive* use of *κατά*, which we disregard here for the sake of brevity and simplicity.

one object to another ; that is to say, in this particular instance it denotes the relation of the assembly to the house, the house was the place *in* which the meetings of the assembly were held, and the house was the place *at* which those who composed the assembly met.

It will be seen that the meaning is much the same in either case, and that therefore neither expression is incorrect. If the assembly is regarded as a meeting, then *in* would be the preferable reading, but if the assembly is regarded as being the persons who composed it, then beyond doubt *at* would be the more exact equivalent to *κατά*, and certainly this latter is the sense in which the word is used in these passages. Hence we judge that A. P. M. is correct in rendering the word *at*, which rendering has the great advantage of distinguishing for the English reader between the cases in which *κατά* is used and those in which *ἐν* (which *must* be rendered *IN*) is employed.

In Rotherham's careful and generally accurate translation the view thus urged is taken, and the word *κατά* rendered *at*.

It is only necessary to add that this question of translation, though important and interesting, does not at all affect the point raised in A. P. M.'s article.—W. H. H.]
