

# UNITY.

*"We, being many, are one body in Christ."*

To maintain the glory of Christ, and to care for the members of His body, are the sacred obligations of each child of God; but to compare a question that merely affects the members with the acceptance of blasphemers of the Head is to become painfully indifferent to the dishonour of our Lord.

C. H. M. thus writes:—"You say that you are grieved by my reference to Bethesda. But I do not see why you should be grieved by the comparison of the two things. In 1848 it was a question of the Head: in 1879 it was a question of the body."

How different the words of J. N. D. !—"I shall never be brought to such wickedness as to treat acceptance of blasphemers as an ecclesiastical question." And again "I could not for a moment put a question of blasphemies against Christ on such a ground. It is really wickedness."—Coll. Writings, xiv., Eccl. iii. pp 459-460.

Would that so dear a servant of Christ as C. H. M. had thought of this before printing and circulating his letter, seeing that his name carries moral weight!

But even "the truth of the unity of the body" has suffered at his hands.

On May 1st, 1881, saints of God known as the "Park Street" local assembly of London (there being 25 other assemblies in London, in fact 31) say,—"*The Park St. assembly was obliged to come to a decision as to what assembly they recognised at Ramsgate, if any.*" Thus they seemed to take the initiative as to this question, though another local assembly, "Hornsey Rise," had assumed to do so the week before. C. H. M., however, insists that the decision of *Park Street* is to be accepted. Whether right or wrong, their decision is to bind all saints. "If wrong, God in His own time and way will make it manifest," is all the comfort C. H. M. can give to the hearts which this decision has broken! With the Roman Catholic, "hear the church" assumes awful proportions: what must we say of "hear Park Street"? If its decision as to Ramsgate is to be held as binding on the whole body of saints on earth, it ought at least, according to Scripture, to be the action of the

assembly which practically represents the body of Christ in London, its locality. The power to bind and loose is not in any one meeting apart from the rest in a town. Park Street did not meet as London.

Scriptural truth as to the one body is denied by C. H. M. insisting on all saints obeying Park Street; for, apart from London, it had no competent authority to deal with the question, even if it came within its jurisdiction.

The judgment itself is also destructive of the truth C. H. M. wishes to enforce by it; because it makes communion with Guildford Hall (which is an impossibility to a continually increasing number of godly saints) the discriminative characteristic of true fellowship, a test which such must refuse if conscience is to be directed by God's word.

Let the following then be weighed by any who desire to see their way, and who seek strength to walk apart from all within the church as well as without contrary to Christ, and to the truth that "*there is one body and one Spirit.*"

I. To enforce the judgment of Park Street, as C. H. M. desires, necessitates doing violence to the members of the body of Christ.

II. To advocate it, as he has done, is to lower the supreme claims of the Person of Christ, by comparing them with those of a few of His saints, or even with them all.

III. To act on it is, practically, to act in the spirit of a sect.

IV. To refuse obedience to it is not to relinquish the principles of what has been called "exclusivism" but to be guided in them by the word of God, resting in the presence of the Holy Ghost as gathered to His name who gathers apart from all evil.

V. To be refused by those who act on it should not divert us for a moment from full and unreserved fellowship with each other, in our common joy and portion as united together by the Holy Ghost to the risen Lord, and in our labour and service for Him.

VI. To remember this word is still a comfort for us in the loss of so many we love. "If I have on my heart the sufferings of the church, little or much, I suffer with Christ. Oh may we lay it to heart, and bear as much of the burden as ever we can; *and go on with Him* through the ups and downs of the present moment."

Since the foregoing was written, a paper has come to hand by "F." distressingly cruel and unjust to Dr. C. Surely at the very time when God was displaying in a most special way, the abounding grace which sustained our revered and beloved brother during his long pilgrimage, and was closing his chequered path with joy in Christ, "F." might have spared him such an attack as this; *exaggerating*, as it does to the utmost, a single failure in a course of over fifty years of holy, heavenly, separation to Christ, and *suppressing* every fact in extenuation of that failure. Take the following:—It is notorious that Mr. Finch was received in London *because he could not go to Temperance Hall*, thus virtually disowning it. If Mr. Darby was distinctly a party to receiving him thus, how easy for one like Dr. C. to be drawn in to break bread with him in Ryde *on the same terms*. After doing so, he rightly asked if he might again break bread in London. He sat outside later on when asked to do so by a brother in his own meeting; and he subsequently *owned* the *wrong* of his act, and promised not to repeat it.

All this is suppressed. Oh! how unlike our Lord. But it was so at London-bridge in 1879. A postscript might have spared the dear aged saint somewhat of his bitter cup of sorrow, but it was suppressed. Can we expect A. H. to fare better at such hands?

There is a hard, legal, pressing of the truth of the one body, according to the letter of scripture, which obliterates the truth that "we are one body *in Christ*." Hence, only as Christ dwells in us practically by faith is the unity a divinely enjoyed reality to us, or duly expressed to others (Eph. iii. 17 to iv. 4, and Col. ii. 19). There is a way of putting unity so as to shut out *grace* on the one hand, and truth on the other, or the true power of the Holy Ghost altogether. There is the building of a house without battlements for the roof; so that the higher one gets, the more the danger, Deut. xxii. 8.

Such ways as these will not meet the spiritual necessities of God's saints. Let those who cannot go with them wait on Him. We want more secret dealing with God to profit by all this heart-searching discipline. All power flows directly from the presence of the Lord, and can only be found there.

The post has just brought me another paper, signed "Edward Crowley." God in His mercy, is discovering the ultimate results, as serious as inevitable, of the unscriptural and despotic course pursued by G. H. and their supporters towards those who could not follow them in 1879.

The principles put forth by Mr. Jull, Mr. Bell, and others to unchurch A. H. for having as they say, "no true judgment of the evil of Dr. C. and Kennington," (the omission to break bread, they own, is *not* the point) Mr. Crowley carries out and applies impartially to *all* the assemblies in England. He shows that *all* but three in Kent! were unfaithful, and even these did not continue in their faithfulness. "*London was gone as an assembly of God, and so too was the country,*" and he asks, "where could the Holy Spirit act? It mattered not, for *all was gone.*" Only the outward form of assemblies was left. All had sunken down into one common abyss of unfaithfulness. In plain words, all had become corrupted, and therefore, (according to "E") ought "*as due to God in righteousness,*" to have ceased to break bread; but alas! they had no "faithful friends" to bid them do so. Is this the development of the principles of G. H.? It would appear so. They practically maintain that any assembly may be divided, and even ended, by forcing a difficult question on them; and if they do not go with (what they call) "the Lord's judgment" they are no longer an assembly. Thus in 1879 they and their party unchurched Abbot's Hill, Broadstairs, and Canterbury. Park Street carries the principle further, and, claiming to have the Lord's judgment as to Ramsgate, forces it on London and unchurches all who do not go with it. Mr. Crowley carries it still further and unchurches all in England for not going with "the three west Kent gatherings which had acted for God." This is the absurdity to which party work has reduced our brethren. Thus do men "wrest" what is written as to the one body "to their own destruction." Arguments are as unnecessary as useless. The folly, not to say worse, is manifest to all.

W. B.

Broadstairs.