

[A New Edition being called for, the only change worth mentioning is in the reduction to absurdity, given in pages 34 and 37 of the First Edition, which is now simplified. Reconsideration adds strength to my sense of the deep evil, however cloaked, of professing truth which there is no serious thought of acting upon or of suffering for. Better never to have known the divine will, than (having learnt) to live in disobedience, and to attempt justifying the sin by a corrupt use of God's Word. "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"]

God's Principle of Unity.

PART I.

THE ESTABLISHMENT.

DEAR BROTHER,

You have kindly sent me your letter, and I have read it carefully, and believe it to be not mistaken only, but a grave, though of course unwitting, dishonour to Christ. You cannot wonder, therefore, that I feel bound to answer it in christian candour and affection. For inexperience one may make allowance; but when crude thoughts are put forth confidently, and their direct tendency is to undermine the truth of God and the holiness of His Church, it is an evident duty to expose them. And certainly an assailant has no reason to complain, if the truth be spoken in love and for the Lord's glory.

The title ("Separation from evil: not God's principle of unity") shocked me and many others. Nor was I relieved by that which you acknowledge in the opening pages. For it is worse than useless to own truth which vanishes—nay, is contradicted—in practice. Separation from the world, and union among the saints, you say, are to be maintained and manifested as God's will, not only in individual walk, but in the assemblies of the saints. (pp. 4, 5.) So far, in words at least, we are agreed. I accept both principles as divine landmarks never to be forsaken; but how are *you* paying them homage? Doubtless they are the necessary result of the indwelling Spirit of God; but are they the principles of the Establishment, of which you are a

minister? You well know they are not; and, mark, I speak of its *principles* now, not of its practice merely.

For (1.) the Rubric for the Communion prescribes that "*every parishioner shall communicate.*" This is not an abuse but the system, and the obvious, undeniable intent of those who formed it; but if so, it is a systematic departure from God's intention as to His Church; for, on your own showing, He desires His saints to be united, and in real manifest separation from the world. Granted that the curate may repel an open evil-liver or a public wrong-doer if impenitent; but what of the numerous parishioners everywhere, who are neither scandalous persons on the one hand nor saints on the other, as both you and they would allow? Scripture, as you admit, contemplates the saints; but the law of the land contemplates the parishioners, the Rubric enjoins these to communicate, and you, as curate, must receive them, contrary to your own express conviction of God's will. The same men, the same day, both before and after the sacrament, you might address as unconverted, imploring them to repent and believe the gospel. That is, the position of a *clergyman* compels you to contradict what you feel and say as a *Christian*: for in the former capacity you are bound to welcome every well-conducted unconverted man—in the latter you are bound to warn him of so great and presumptuous a sin. Were you nothing but Christ's servant, you would faithfully do His will, whatever it might cost; and if God calls His saints to be separate from the world in their assemblies, you would not blow hot and cold in the same pamphlet, but rather seek to obey Him, especially in the most solemn act of christian worship, the Lord's Supper. In all circumstances, your language would be consistent and your conduct in accordance with your sentiments. You would entreat or warn the unregenerate; you would teach or exhort the believers. Now, on the contrary, you may theorize as you will, you may hold ever so high the plain principles God gives for the guidance of His own redeemed; but you have not, and, as a clergyman, you *cannot* have, "gatherings of the saints separate from those who know not Jesus." (Page 4.) It is, you confess, the will of God that it should be so; but the rules of the Establishment require that it should not be so, unless we conceive every parish without a single worldly man. It is idle to suppose that you can in this thing comply with God's Word and man's Rubric; and it is painfully clear

that, for the present, you have chosen to obey man rather than God.

(2.) Plain as Scripture is that the saints are one and bound to manifest their unity, in private and in public, it is just as certain that this is ignored and impossible in the Anglican system. Forms, services, doctrines too, are insisted on, which many intelligent believers reject as foreign and opposed to the Word of God. Hence separation becomes imperative, unless they are prepared to give up a good conscience and to join in what they regard as sin. I am aware that the Evangelicals, who groan under some of the offices, are apt to boast of the Thirty-nine Articles. But I, for one, dare not sign Art. ii., because its doctrine is, to my mind, confused and erroneous in the extreme. God needed the atoning sacrifice, we (not He) needed reconciliation. So uniformly say the Scriptures, but not the Article. It treats our blessed Lord's suffering and death as the means of reconciling His Father to us; whereas the truth is, that God was in Christ reconciling (not Himself to the world, but) the world to Himself. (2 Cor. v.; and such is the teaching of Rom. v. and Col. i.) This is serious; because it misrepresents, not some curious point of prophecy, but the gospel, making the Son's death the procuring cause of the Father's love, instead of viewing the cross as its blessed fruit and brightest demonstration. Thousands of devoted saints, who rest on the atonement as their sole trust in the matter of their sins, utterly disclaim this doctrine: indeed, many of the more enlightened clergy, as you may know, denounce it urgently, when they are not on their mettle in vain defence of the Article. And what is their position, consequently, in the eye of Anglicanism? The fifth canon leaves no doubt: "Whosoever shall hereafter affirm that *any* of the Nine and Thirty Articles are in *any part* superstitious or erroneous, or such as he may not with a good conscience subscribe unto, LET HIM BE EXCOMMUNICATED IPSO FACTO," &c. Which, then, is guilty, which is the schismatic, the Christian who adheres to the truth of God, or the body which presumes to excommunicate every one who impugns its own blundering perversion of the truth? Integrity of heart will not take advantage of the laxity of the day. The authorities may be indisposed to enforce the doctrine and discipline of the Anglican body; but as long as the Articles and Canons are the standard, (and you refer to them both as such,) is

it honest to treat them as a dead letter when they prove inconvenient or unsound ?

Evidently, then, the two truths, which you press as very plain in God's Word and given for the guidance of His people, are directly and completely set aside by the formularies of your own system. What is to be done ? It were bad to confess the truth and do it not ; it is worse still to confess, and then to weave reasons or excuses, yea, even from God's Word, for not doing His will. No doubt, one *might* remain a clergyman, disputing every Article, and defying every Canon ; but, assuredly, as a straightforward (not to say a christian) man, the Prayer-Book ought to bind the conscience, while one continues to be even a Churchman. However, acting honestly or dishonestly in that position, it is as clear as light, that you cannot there carry out the principles of separation from the world and union among the saints. The so-called "Brethren" may be right, or they may be wrong ; but your position is not enviable. It follows from your own admissions, that you certainly *are not* obeying what you know to be the will of God, and that you *cannot* do so, while you are a minister or member of the Establishment.

I bless the Lord that *He* does not thus perplex the soul, nor sanction the barriers which hinder our obeying Himself. There were no uninspired Articles, Canons, or Rubrics to trouble the conscience or interfere with holy liberty in apostolic days. And why have them now ? The Word of God being a sufficient and a perfect rule, they are an incumbrance if they agree with it, and they are a nuisance and a sin if they do not. What not gather as saints, separate from the world, unto the name of Jesus, the sole adequate centre for the redeemed ? This embraces both your principles, as it was beyond controversy the original ground on which the saints assembled, worshipped God, and edified one another. Has it lost its virtue ? or have saints of God lost their faith in it ? Be assured, if it be His will, it abides the only divine gathering-place, for such as desire, no matter what the circumstances, no matter how great the difficulty, to please Him. Has God revoked His will because of the darkness of Popery or the divisions of Protestantism ? Were any, in our day, to reform the old Constitutions and Canons ecclesiastical, or to invent a new code, they might (not to say must) fail as egregiously as their predecessors. Our wisdom is to commit ourselves

to no standard but God's Word, and to trust His Spirit for light and strength to act upon it. There is not a true doctrine which is not revealed there perfectly. There is not a case of discipline for which it does not provide in principle. Are we wrong in cleaving to it, and to it alone, for our Articles, Canons, Rubrics, and every rule conceivable in things christian and ecclesiastical? If you own this is right, our basis is admitted; and the difference between us is, that we, surrendering all we know to be incompatible, take our stand upon it in simple faith, while you are in quest of reasons for adhering to a system where, confessedly, you cannot be subject to God's will as to the assembly.

You speak of the Lord's owning and abiding with any as "our warrant for owning and meeting with them." (p. 5.) This, forgive my saying it, is absurd. It would follow that we are to own and meet with every sect in Protestant Christendom, and with the "Brethren" too, I presume! That the Lord is indeed gracious, spite of sin, is most certain; but does He own false principles in opposition to His own revealed will? And if He does not, ought we? There are true saints in the most faulty sects of Christendom, and the Lord does not fail to cherish them, and we surely ought to do the same; but does He therefore approve, or call us to approve, of that denominational idea to which the sects owe their existence, and which is irreconcilably at variance with the manifestation of the one body of Christ? You say, "We must deal with facts." (p. 6.) My answer is, the Word of God must deal with us, and all facts must be judged by that Word. What abuse can be more miserable than to turn the Lord's blessing His saints, spite of their connexion with sects, into a pretence that He owns the sects themselves, i.e., owns human institutions, which, as far as they can, nullify the testimony He wishes us to bear to the saints' unity! If you *merely* mean that He blesses and uses the saints in the various sections, it is true; but there the argument ends, and it is worthless. The sole criterion here is the Word of God; and it, we have seen, decides for holy unity, in contrast with a system which deliberately embraces the world and scatters the saints.

Even you, an official, cannot but confess "how much there is that is sad and burdensome to the spirit" in your own body; but you add, "*not in doctrine, however, but in practice.*" (pp. 6, 7.) I demur to this reservation. It has

been already remarked that, even as to the simple fundamental doctrine of grace, the second Article is not only defective, but false. Nor is this all. Without dwelling on debateable ground in the intermediate statements, I must express my judgment that Article xxiii. is clean contrary to the truth on the momentous subject of ministry. For lawful call is there restricted to those who are chosen and called to this work by *men* who have public authority given unto them [by whom given?] to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard. But Scripture is express that it is *the Lord*, not man, who calls; that even apostles had to pray *Him* to send forth labourers; that it is the lord who, on his departure, gave his goods to his servants, to every man according to his several ability; that it is the ascended *Christ* who gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers; that *the manifestation of the Spirit* is given to every man to profit withal; that as every man has received the *gift*, they are to minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God; and this, as 1 Cor. xiv. fully and precisely proves, within the assembly, as well as without. Not a word demands, warrants, or even permits, appointment by "men." It is an arbitrary usurpation of Christ's function. For, so far is it from being true that a call by men is necessary to validate ministry, that not a single precept, principle, or example can be adduced from Scripture to show that a man ought to have it before preaching to the world or teaching in the assembly. Not only is such a form needless, but it is wrong and disorderly, if indeed we bow to holy writ. That there were certain local charges, such as elders and deacons, where appointment was requisite, I fully believe; but these must not be confounded with ministering in the "congregation;" for the elders were not necessarily teachers, (as 1 Tim. iv. distinctly shows,) and still less the deacons. The appointment of these local charges depended, according to Scripture, on apostles, or on apostolic delegates, such as Titus. Of course, therefore, I consider Article xxiii. erroneous, and seriously so; for it goes openly to deny lawful ministry without this human call. And its natural complement, Article xxvi., maintains the authority of these man-made ministers when set up. If the only legitimate ministry be that which is chosen and called by man, no wonder that unworthy functionaries are expected; no wonder that the vicious step of

such an appointment entails the equal evil of authenticating them, in the profaned name of the Lord, when they are so chosen and called. The double sin is thus wrought of denying the Lord's ministers who do not accept this call, and of conferring that title on ministers of Satan who may easily submit to it. And yet, whoever affirms that he cannot with a good conscience subscribe to these mischievous dogmas, is *ipso facto* excommunicated! Does the Lord own such a system, such principles, and such practices as these?

Article xxxv. seems to me a strange aspirant for so solemn a ceremony as subscription; for I am sure there are many eccentric and superstitious things in the Homilies; though I dare say they are as good as the Apocryphal books read for example of life and instruction of manners, according to Article vi. Again, Articles xxxvi. and xxxvii. (the latter as regards the *ecclesiastical* supremacy of the sovereign) hardly deserve discussion, as being mere figments, the offspring of superstition on the one hand and of worldliness on the other. What can justify a man's subscribing that which he believes to be false? Surely that body is not Christ's epistle, which first creates needless stumbling-blocks, by making questions such as these "Articles of religion" (!) and then excommunicates the conscientious Christian who affirms them to be erroneous. You cannot say that he is no true saint who thinks and says they are wrong; and yet your system excommunicates all such therein. If it were only for this, the Establishment could not be the Church of God in England, nor a Church of God anywhere, but a human body or sect. Its constitution, its law, necessarily separates from itself all believers who refuse to put the doctrine of the Trinity on the same level, as to required subscription, with the Protestant device of making the Queen's Majesty chief governor in states ecclesiastical, in order to get rid of Papal pretensions. Very many saints in your system believe the Queen's ecclesiastical supremacy is a mistake. Is it fair to appeal to the Canons and to deny that they are excommunicated?

Besides, the Articles are eminently deficient in another way. They do not even allude to some of the weightiest of revealed truths. Thus, though the deity and personality of the Spirit are upheld, a dead and ominous silence reigns as to His regeneration, indwelling (individual and corporate), and other operations. As far as this Confession of

Faith is concerned, we could not know that there was such a thing as the baptism of the Holy Ghost, or His presence and distribution of gifts in the Church. Again, where is the testimony to Christ's Headship of the Church? where to His priesthood or His advocacy? where to the promised kingdom, to the restoration of Israel, to the blessing of the earth under His reign, and, above all, to the Church's hope in His coming? For these truths, all of them important in respect both of man and of God's glory, there is no room, no, not for a word; but, somehow, perhaps a dozen articles wrangle with the vanities of Rome, and even the dreams of the Anabaptists are not without a formal notice. And this meagre, negative, controversial, incorrect string of things, eternal and temporal, catholic and sectarian, good, bad, and indifferent, the clergy generally must subscribe! Nay, in the royal declaration which precedes, it is laid down that these articles "do contain the true doctrine of the Church of England agreeable to God's Word: which we do therefore ratify and confirm, requiring all our loving subjects [observe, *not* saints of God, but "subjects" of the English crown] to continue in the uniform profession thereof, and prohibiting the least difference from the said articles." Certainly, "the Defender of the Faith and Supreme Governor of the Church" ought to have been inspired, if not infallible, to justify such a mandate.

It is an utter mistake, therefore, that in the Establishment "the authority of the Word is maintained: the individual conscience is to bow to it alone," if it be meant that "the least difference" from its own accredited formularies is sanctioned within its pale. The sixth Article simply asserts, in opposition to Rome, the sufficiency of the Scriptures, i. e., of the canonical books of the Old and New Testament, *for salvation*; but it is wrongly inferred from this that any member, above all a clergyman, may legitimately dissent from any part of the Prayer-book, no matter how loudly he may plead God's Word for a contrary view. It is taken for granted in the Article that the doctrine and regimen of the Establishment agree with, and may be proved by, Scripture, as is plain from Articles xx. and xxi. But then this is the question. And what avails the Christian's assertion of the Word as the only authority, if he comes to the conclusion that much in the Articles and Services is without and against Scripture? Such an one, if he would walk uprightly before God and man, must

walk outside the Establishment. The Lord may convert sinners and comfort saints there, and everywhere; but to conclude thence that He ever was in, and abides now with, unscriptural Articles and Canons, or that He guides men in profiting by the status which the Establishment gives them, spite of their underlying its excommunication, is virtually to impute their own lack of holiness (awful to think!) to the Lord. And this, allow me to say, my dear brother, is just the logical result of your latitudinarianism, far as you may be from intending it.

But I have not done with the question of doctrines yet, and am sorry to say that, if we found a singular absence of some in the Articles, their presence is still more suspicious elsewhere. Thus, take the Baptismal service, which you have yourself sought to defend in Appendix B. (Pp. 44, 45.) You assert that "they (it, and the Burial service) are true of believers," and that, if only the children of communicants were baptized, and if only communicants were buried with the prescribed service, "much of the present difficulty would be done away: difficulty which exists not from anything untrue in the services and requirements of the Church, [i. e., the English Establishment,] but from that state of things which allows those who do not conform to the requirements of the Church to come within the operation of its services."

Now I am compelled to deny the accuracy of your allegations and of your reasonings. The Baptismal service is said to be for believers; but how, when infants are the subjects? Is it pretended that infants are believers? Or do *you* believe that the Establishment "exalts the Word of God alone" in the scheme of sponsors, that is, other people vowing repentance and faith for the unconscious babe? Besides, the service itself contradicts your assumption. If the child has not been already baptized, the priest proceeds to say that all men are conceived and born in sin, not that the children of believers are born in faith and a new life. He thereon calls on those present to pray that God would grant to the child that thing which by nature he cannot have: that he may be baptized with water and the Holy Ghost, and received into Christ's holy Church. Evidently, therefore, the service is not made for a believing child; for he that believeth hath eternal life, and we are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. So the prayer: "Wash him and sanctify him with the Holy Ghost; that he, being

delivered from thy wrath, may be received into the ark of Christ's Church:" a very bad misapplication of the type, for it puts the Church in the place of Christ. But, letting this pass, the sense is plain that the subject for baptism is yet to be washed, sanctified, delivered from wrath, and received into Christ's Church. So, in the next petition, "We call upon thee for this infant, that he, coming to thy holy Baptism, may receive remission of sins by spiritual regeneration." Clearly, the child is supposed *not yet* to have received remission of sins, which every Christian possesses. On the other hand, *after the ceremony*, the priest says, "We receive this child into the congregation of Christ's flock," &c., and "seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this child is regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ's Church, let us give thanks," &c. "We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for thine own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into thy holy Church." I must say, then, that you have not correctly represented the service. Its own unambiguous language is entirely inconsistent with the trite and unworthy sophism that this office, at least, is framed for, and true of, believers; for it supposes the child to be in a state of nature and sin before the ceremony, and actually regenerate immediately after. I ask you, as in the sight of God, do *you* receive this as the truth? Or is it not rather the remains of Popish darkness from which the English Reformers had not wholly emerged any more than the Lutherans? God forbid that I should speak slightingly of those blessed men of God. Yet that is no reason why one should continue to subscribe what he believes is an error, and be an active or passive party to the delusion of Baptismal regeneration. You may hide yourself behind the decision of the Gorham case. If so, it is, in my judgment, beneath a godly man who desires, at any cost, to glorify Christ; for that decision did *not* deny Baptismal regeneration to be the doctrine of the service, but simply barred a bishop from refusing to institute a clergyman who did not hold it. That is, men were suffered, even if they were Evangelicals, to take a benefice in the Establishment. The Privy Council refused to go farther. The doctrine of the service remains, of course, exactly where it was. Do you hold it? If you do not, what are we to think of your administering a rite in terms which you believe to be un-

sound on a vital doctrine, and which you would strongly condemn in the pulpit?

But it will make the false doctrine still more felt, if we examine the ministration to such as are of riper years. The grand difference there is that sponsors disappear, the persons to be baptized answering for themselves. "Doubt ye not therefore," it is said in the exhortation, "but earnestly believe that He will favourably receive these present persons, truly repenting and coming unto Him by faith; that He will grant them remission of their sins, and bestow upon them the Holy Ghost: that He will give them the blessing of eternal life," &c. Again, the prayer runs, "Give thy Holy Spirit to them that they may be born again," &c. Then *after the rite*, follow substantially the same thanksgivings and prayers as in the case of infants. That is, the doctrine of this service is, that adults, who are supposed to have true repentance and faith, are viewed as *not born again* till they are baptized: they are regenerate only thereon or rather therein. *This* form of the service is avowedly for believers; but alas! the provision for adults only increases the evil, and demonstrates incontestably that the services attribute the new birth to the sacrament. For these persons, confessedly believers, are yet treated as wanting the blessing of eternal life till the application of the water, whereupon they are at once regarded as made members of Christ. Do I, or did you, bear false witness to the Baptismal service and its doctrine?

What gives unspeakable importance to all this, is that on these anti-scriptural services the system rests; for only by their means, *i.e.* by sacramental efficacy in lieu of saving faith, could the rubric enjoin every parishioner to communicate, the line being drawn (not between believers and unbelievers, as you confess it should be, but) between the moral and the scandalously immoral, which exactly suits the world but is not the footing of the Church of God.

The Establishment is a grand, national institution. It has strong charms for my natural heart, many a fond association, countless links with the past and the present. But how efface from my eyes the view grace has given me, in the ever-living Word, of God's Church? How forget that the Holy Ghost is sent down from heaven to gather the members of the one body, apart from the world, into present manifest subjection to their Lord? I dare not be

disobedient to the heavenly vision, but seek, wherever I know saints of God gathered to the name of Jesus, there to confess my allegiance with unsullied conscience, there to bewail the present ruin of what was once so united and fair, there to cherish so much the more jealously all that remains through grace, there to be edified and, in my little measure, to edify others, through the sure Word and blessed Spirit of God.

For the pious and generous efforts of many saints, for the devotedness and zealous service of many a minister of Christ therein, I can heartily bless God, and desire to follow them wherever they follow their Master and mine. But I maintain as a duty to Him, and in the fullest love to them, that the Establishment never even professed nor sought to be a gathering of none but saints to the name of Jesus, owning the Holy Ghost alone as their faithful, present guide, and having the Word of God, the whole Word, and nothing but the Word, as their rule. In short, admirable as the Establishment is in many respects, *it is not, it never was, a Church of God, according to the scriptural notion and working of that Church.*

But this, if true, (and I challenge grave and godly enquiry,) clears the way at once. For if you and I are children of God, do we not owe it to Him to eschew every association of man which hinders our acting humbly and obediently as members of His Church? As a mere man, I might conceive myself bound to the Church of my country and sovereign; if radically inclined, I might claim the right to choose or make a church of my own; but as a Christian, my duty is to do the will of my God and Father; and if He has laid down in His Word the nature, character, principles, and limits of His Church, God forbid that I should not be found cleaving to His Word, and renouncing, as far as I know, all that it condemns. Is it really come to this, that the public walk and the worship of the Church are the only field where self-will is no sin, and Scripture ceases to have authority over the conscience? If satisfied that the foundations and distinctive lineaments of that which we have traditionally accepted as the Church, are unscriptural—if convinced that its headship, its ministry, and its membership, are alike the voice of strangers, are the sheep not to hear the Shepherd's voice? Are we not to go forth unto Him without the camp bearing His reproach?

You say that "services can only be framed for believers."

(p. 44.) Excuse me if I show that those who made or compiled the liturgy have wonderfully succeeded in framing an order for prayer day by day, which aims at meeting the wants of both sinners and saints, but in truth is appropriate, as is the fact in most compromises, for neither. For whose use are the Scripture Sentences at the beginning of Morning and Evening Prayer? Take, for example, the first: "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive." Can you pretend that these words, the first words habitually used in the Daily Service, are for believers? So too the texts from Matthew iii. and Luke xv. The question is not their inspiration, but their right application. Can you pretend that *God* meant them to open the worship of His assembly? Does He sanction therein the presence of wicked men who have to turn from their wickedness? of unconverted sinners who have to repent? of prodigals who have to arise and go to their father, who are not yet clothed with the best robe, who are lost and not found, dead and not alive?

That passages of another tenor, and only true of those actually saints, could be culled, is not denied; but what I have commented on evinces that conscience was too strong for the compilers. The theory, the unquestionable purpose, was to receive to all acts of worship every decently behaved parishioner, already made a member of Christ by baptism; but they could not enter on the ordinary daily service without an implied acknowledgment of their error in Christianizing the world. For the sentences selected (Wheatly says, with justice) are "such as are the most plain and the most likely to bring *all sorts of sinners* to repentance." It is not true, then, that saints only are contemplated here, as the best-known illustrator of the Prayer Book allows. It is an appeal to the wicked and impenitent, moving them to repent and be converted.

The real drift is unequivocally and distressingly confirmed by that which follows the general confession—"the Absolution, or Remission of Sins, to be pronounced by the Priest alone standing; the people still kneeling." How an intelligent believer, be he layman or clerk, can reconcile his conscience to this form, is an enigma to me, save as a striking instance of the darkening power of religious habits. For if we regard it as not going beyond a declaration of the gospel, the supposition is destroyed that only

believers are in view. If we understand it as addressed to saints, what an extravagant denial of the privileges of the Church? I can comprehend, when the special occasion demands it, one or more open offenders under discipline and needing restoration publicly. I cordially allow the value to God's children of confessing their sins of omission and commission individually, and of confessing their faults to one another where requisite; but that the entire assembly, as such, should thus be addressed as penitently awaiting pardon through believing the gospel, is a contrast with all that Scripture intimates about the Church and its worship.

Curiously enough, to kneel on the Lord's Day was thought shocking in Christendom generally for many centuries after Christ, gross as the declension was in other respects. We know from almost every ecclesiastical writer of note that on this day there was no kneeling any more than fasting, "as symbolic of the resurrection (says the very ancient author of *Quæst. et Resp. ad Orthodox. cxv.*) by which, through the grace of Christ, we were delivered from our sins and from death, which is mortified thereby." Indeed, in consequence of little discrepancies of practice, the Council of Nice went so far as to make a canon that on such occasions prayers should be made standing. (*Labbé, Coll. Concil. vol. ii. p. 246.*) I doubt that an allowed exception to this practice can be shown for 700 years; so that I have often marvelled how the sticklers for the Catholic usages of those early days could quietly resign themselves to a practice which was so universally and authoritatively discountenanced. Mistake me not: I do not contend for a superstitious revival of this or any other tradition. I am sure it is quite christian to praise standing and to pray on one's knees every day of the week. But I do not hesitate to record my opinion that the form grew out of (possibly the "Let us stand upright" was no better than a petrification grown out of) the blessed standing in conscious liberty and holy joy in which the Church should worship on the Lord's Day above all days. In the so-called Church of England it is not only that they are all, saints and sinners, by an alteration for the worse suggested by Bucer and Martyr, reduced on that day as much as another to an attitude which, for so many ages, was reserved on Sundays for a state of penance, but the substance of the error is betrayed by the demand and supply of a constantly recurring public absolution. Is it not the very spirit of

the Jews, who must first clear themselves by a fresh sin-offering, before they dared to pass on to the sacrifices of sweet savour?

Besides, there is another serious fault, which proves that the Absolution is not merely declarative. The Priest pronounces it, not a deacon, who nevertheless takes authority, when ordained, to read the gospel, and preach the same if licensed thereto by the Bishop. Clearly, therefore, it is not such an announcement of forgiveness as the gospel contains; for in that case a licensed deacon might act as well as a Priest. And the people would sit to hear, instead of kneeling, "the Priest alone standing." A most unwarrantable liberty was here taken, derogatory to any Christians who might be in the congregation, deluding to the mass of unbelievers there, presumptuous on the minister's part, and in no ordinary degree obliterating the efficacy of Christ's work. To show that I am not exaggerating, let me transcribe Wheatly's conclusion. "From all which it is plain that this Absolution is more than declarative, that it is truly effective, insuring and conveying to the proper subjects thereof the very Absolution or Remission itself. It is as much a bringing of God's pardon to the penitent member of Christ's Church, and as effectual to his present benefit, as an authorized messenger, bringing pardon from his sovereign to a condemned penitent criminal, is effectual to his present pardon and release from the before-appointed punishment." Pardon to a condemned penitent criminal! What a testimony to this part of the Anglican Service! Could it suit the saints in Scripture, "who are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh?"

I have no desire to write of prayers in a critical view, but I must show cause why one who cleaves to the whole counsel of God as now fully revealed, is excluded from joining in the language of the Prayer-Book, if he would keep a conscience void of offence. How, then, could such an one adopt the Litany as an unobjectionable expression of his breathings to God? Where is the spirit of adoption there? Where the peaceful dependence of a child resting in his Father's love? Where a soul strong in the grace that is in Christ? There is the cry of "miserable sinners." When one thinks of "every parishioner," it is hardly to be regretted that the service is very far from uttering the pleas of a faith which does not exist. But if it be thus more

suitable for *unbelievers*, may we not grieve over "saints in the Church of England" who are here made to forget the peace which they have with God, the grace wherein they stand, and the glory in the hope of which they are entitled to rejoice? "Remember not, Lord, our offences, nor the offences of our forefathers; neither take thou vengeance of our sins: spare us, good Lord, spare thy people, whom thou hast redeemed with thy most precious blood, and be not angry with us for ever." Strange infatuation, that true saints of God, "whom the Lord makes happy in his love," should habitually unite in petitions which might have served more or less before the cross, but are quite inconsistent with peace and joy in believing, such as a feeble Christian may now possess! I can understand an earthly people, like Israel, redeemed by power and not yet by the blood of Christ, deprecating divine anger; I admit fully that even the saints in their midst might do the same—indeed, could do no other, till the great sacrifice was offered and sin was put away. But the New Testament never supposes such a character of relationship or supplication since the day of Pentecost. The sentiment is not applicable to the Christian: to adopt it is so far to Judaize, which is a grave and dangerous error, as St. Paul's warnings show. Let me ask you, my brother, to explain how it can be said of real Christians, "*though we be tied and bound with the chain of our sins, yet let the pitifulness of thy great mercy loose us?*" If the gospel be true, those who believe are already forgiven for Christ's sake; and this, not some favoured members of the family, but all the little children; (1 John ii. 12:) and we are called, all of us, to give thanks unto the Father, who *hath* made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who *hath* delivered us from the power of darkness, and *hath* translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom *we have* redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins. (Col. i.) "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus *hath made me free* from the law of sin and death." In short, on this all-important truth, the effect of Christ's death and resurrection for the believer, the Bible and the Prayer-Book teach, the former that the saint has been made free from the law of sin and death, the latter that the Anglican worshippers, "tied and bound with the chain of their sins," must pray to be loosed. If the New Testament language is founded on faith in the deliverance brought in

by Christ's work, the prayer just cited cannot be acquitted of ignorance and belief.

Enough, however, of this distasteful task which your tract has imposed on me. Enough, and perhaps to spare, has been produced to satisfy an unbiassed spiritual man, that the services partake of the incoherent character, attaching to the whole structure. The daily service, I have said, is *not* adapted for believers, though I am far from admitting that it is a scriptural provision for unbelievers. The framers tried to meet both, but have succeeded in neither case. And why dissect the order for the Communion, the Visitation of the Sick, the Burial Service, the Communion, (is *this* for believers too?) and the Consecration of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons? To expose them would doubtless swell the account, some of bold contrariety to Scripture, others of palpable Judaizing. But I desire to say no more at this time than what may be required to convince a fair mind, that the English Establishment, spite of excellent things and people within it, is really, to all intents and purposes, *the world treated as the Church*, and this on the footing of religious ordinances, instead of living faith. There is not the slightest need that the priest or a single parishioner should be converted: the ritual would still proceed decorously, and *there* would be, according to canon-law, the sole authorized minister and church in the parish. Were the Holy Ghost to work in converting and gathering together souls to the name of Jesus, in dependence on His own presence and power, their assembly, however pleasing to God, would be denounced as a schism, not by you, perhaps, nor by a Tractarian merely, but by that which you are both, as clergymen, bound to obey—by the plain, unrepealed canons of your body. It is fully granted that there may be a godly minister, and a few or many saints in a particular district. But this is a mere accident and in no way essential to the system, the principle of which is to comprehend in a common religious profession all the subjects of the Crown, and to open to that which should be a holy table for a peculiar people, redeemed and purified, to every parishioner who is not a scandal to his neighbour. "The Church of England," say you, "rightly requires that all its members should be communicants." (p. 44.) But all its members, where there are no separate meetings, are all the christened inhabitants—that is, in fact, all the world who are there. And the ground on which

this identification of the world with the Church goes on, is that they have all been made members of Christ in baptism and recognized as already regenerate and forgiven all their sins when they were confirmed. This is unquestionably the regular doctrine and system of the Establishment. If it be not yours, as I believe it is not, it is because you really are not a Churchman, save nominally. But if it is the plain, positive intencion of the system, whether people carry it out or not, your own loudly-proclaimed principles, union among the saints and separation from the world, are wholly inconsistent with it; the laws and fundamental constitution of the Establishment render them impossible to be adopted in the public services; and thus you are obliged, so long as you remain within your present borders, to be glaringly, hopelessly, false to the very truths which you have publicly confessed to be your own principles, and the will of the Lord. If you believe that God begets by the word of truth—by the gospel which is preached to souls, (James i.; 1 Peter i.,) and not that infants are regenerate by baptism, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council may protect you, if you should be hard pressed by episcopal rigour for your inconsistency; but ordinary conscience must condemn the official employment of language which altogether differs from your real thoughts on the momentous point of the new birth: language which makes (not a service for Christians, but) quasi-Christians for all the services which follow from Confirmation to Burial. *Ought a Christian to say anywhere, above all in the professed worship and service of God, that which he believes to be untrue?*

PART II.

THE "BRETHREN."

WE are now come to the second part of my task; a reply, not to your apology for the Establishment, but to your strictures on the "Brethren" so called. Whether you have adhered to Scripture in attacking us, any more than to the Prayer-Book in defending your own position, remains to be shown.

Some six and thirty or more years ago, a few Christians were led to feel much the worldly, and abnormal state of Christendom. One of them was of Romanist parentage, the others were Anglicans. They prayed, they mourned over the low condition of themselves and their brethren at large, they searched the Word of God. They knew it was evil to worship God unscripturally; they saw it was right to meet and break bread, as disciples of the Lord and in dependence on the Holy Ghost. Pretending to nothing of their own, in conscious feebleness, but most happy in the discovery of their liberty in Christ to remember Him and build up each other, they welcomed in His name every saint, joining with them in any service where it could be with a good conscience, but refusing to own whatever they believed to be contrary to Scripture. On one ex-clergyman (who above the rest realized the present ruin of the christian profession, and was led out into much prayer, fasting, and humiliation about it before God,) special honour was put of the Lord; for He was pleased through him to revive, from the Scriptures, the mystery of Christ and the Church, the true character of our hope in the Lord's coming, the personal presence and operations of the Holy Ghost in the Church and the Christian, with a vast body of corollaries dependant on those grand truths, which re-acted on the gospel itself and set the salvation of God in a far clearer light.

Thus much I may say the more freely, inasmuch as I had not the honour of being a pioneer in the holy testimony of that early hour. But I do not feel at liberty to speak of the practical effects of what, I am assured, was the Holy Ghost's action on their souls and of many more who were

attracted by degrees in England and abroad, as well as in Ireland.

Their position was this:—instead of making a Church, they owned the members of *the* Church of God, wherever they might be. They did *not* essay to form a perfect Church of their own; but they sought into that which God's Word reveals about His Church, and to this perfect revelation, this only, they clave. They found it spoke of a body on earth, Christ's body, its members one with Christ and with one another by virtue of the Holy Ghost's presence in them. They believe that, scattered as the members are, and grieved as the Spirit is, He is still here to guide the assembly; and that this assembly of God, the Church, is still here to be guided, and that, according to the Saviour's promise, two or three gathered to His name might count on His presence in their midst. Why not act upon it? They believed that nationalism and dissent are unknown to Scripture and contrary to its plain principles and injunctions. Why act with either? The one makes its basis broader, the other narrower than Scripture warrants. The "Brethren" saw clearly that the Scriptural ground is that of Christ's body—in its separation from the world, essentially different from a national system; and in its unity, just as essentially opposed to dissenting sects, formed on points of difference, which sever, instead of uniting, the saints of God. They did not organize a new system with its peculiar laws and regulations; they commended to each other the Word of God alone. What Christian could question *that* rule of faith and standard of practice? They did not call or choose their own ministers, but trusted the Holy Ghost to raise up and send whom *He* would. Who can gainsay the ministers whom the Lord sends?

Can you tell me of any saints of God, since the Church departed from its scriptural ground, who ever before saw, or assembled on, this basis? Do you know of any save "Brethren" who are simply, thoroughly acting on it now? Is it not large enough to admit every saint who walks as such, without imposing a single condition which he does not own? Is it not exclusive enough to keep off all who are believed on adequate evidence to be yet in the flesh? Does it not leave room for the Holy Ghost to exercise all His rights in the Church of God? Does it not maintain, in deed and in truth, the authority of the entire Word of God, without one human tradition to burden or stumble the

conscience? And is not this, then, the only ground entitled to claim the ear of every saint of God? I read of that basis, and no other, for the Church of God in Scripture; I see that basis, and no other, taken among "Brethren," and among "Brethren" only. Try, if you please, and face the truth of Scripture and of the facts. You have only as yet assailed a shadow of your own making; and even in this you have fallen into palpable, surprising errors, as I am forced to prove.

You allude, first of all, to a tract written by Mr. Darby in view of the Evangelical Alliance. The title ("Separation from Evil, God's Principle of Unity") you have impeached—I hope, because you did not understand it. "First," you say, "separation from anything never can be a principle of unity; a common *rejection* of any error or errors does not afford a centre of union to those who mutually reject these errors." (p. 8.) Hence it is transparent that you confound the *principle* of unity with its *centre*. Had you read the tract with average care, the oversight could hardly have been made; for the writer has distinguished each element of unity with his usual precision. If "separation from evil is of God," as you do and must allow in the same page, if holiness be inseparable from His nature and all His other dealings, does a *Christian* want proof that God does not abandon His own moral character in the unity He forms and recognizes among His saints? On what possible principle save that of holiness (which is but another way of expressing separation from evil, where evil exists) could God carry out unity here below? You are surely not prepared to assert that He sanctions a unity which must exclude Himself, unless iniquity can have fellowship with Him.

The truth is, that you, probably misled by Groves' Memoir, have fallen into the blunder of understanding "centre of union," where Mr. D. meant and wrote accurately, "principle of unity." But even here you are wrong again; for the true centre of union is neither "love," as you say, nor "life," as Groves says, but *Christ Himself*—Christ dead, risen, and glorified at the right hand of God, the chief corner-stone of God's house, the head of the Church which is His body. I should be ashamed to cite texts of Scripture in proof of the truth that Christ is the centre of God's unity, any more than for the other truth that holiness is its necessary principle.

But if separation from evil be the only principle on which

the unity of a holy God can be conceived to be carried out in an evil world, and if He has sent down the Holy Ghost to be the efficient agent of it, uniting us to Christ on high, I need not occupy myself with your next error, the imputing of "sad consequences" to a holy principle. It is false that the maintenance of unity according to holiness "leads to separation between true brethren." It does suppose the judgment, in the power of the Spirit and by the Word, of those who sin; but this is a blessed, not a sad, consequence, and the direct command of God. "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened." Separation from evil is here most unquestionably laid down as God's principle of unity: and in holiness is that unity to be guarded practically at any cost. Otherwise all degenerates into the mystery of iniquity, and a form of godliness denying the power. "From such," says the Spirit of God, "turn away."

Much which you urge in pages 8—14 is not to me the evidence of a peaceful heart. The tone in which you resent anyone's thinking your course not quite consistent, somewhat betrays that spirit of judgment of which you accuse others, to say the least, much too broadly. He that is conscious of doing the will of God, can afford to go calmly forward in the path of Christ, undisturbed by the censoriousness of men. But I have generally found that "he who did his neighbour wrong" is the first to complain, "who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?"

If I do not mistake your allusions, you blame the discipline we have pursued as to Bethesda. Now I freely acknowledge the shortcoming of the "Brethren" and my own. But I am thoroughly satisfied it is of God that we should not have communion with a congregation which deliberately received the intelligent partisans of a blasphemous against Christ.* If you suppose that a believer, or a company of believers, can receive, or bid God speed to,

* The late Mr. Groves went along with Bethesda warmly. This was to be expected from one whose principle it was, if principle it can be called, to bear with all the evils of Christians rather than separate from their good. (p. 38.) *Neither* of these things, it is evident, ought to be done by the believer, nor ever was accepted by "Brethren."—It should be known also, that Mr. G., though often breaking bread with "Brethren," because of their receiving all Christians, notoriously *never* agreed with their principles; as I am informed by those who took that position from the very first, and adhere to it unswervingly still. The effect of his own peculiar theory of universal association was practically to leave him universally "unattached." And it is this absence of a fixed, holy, divine principle in matters ecclesiastical, which is the chief point of sympathy between him and you.

such as bring not the doctrine of Christ but of a false Christ; that they can justify that reception when they know the depth of the evil involved, without becoming partakers of their evil deeds, I wholly dissent from you, and believe that the course adopted from 2 John is one of real love and holiness, and that neutrality in such a case would be the gravest sin and the foulest wrong to the Son of God. Have you not ventured to give an opinion on a matter of the most serious import, which you are not in a position to judge?

You refer to such passages as Isaiah i. 16, 17; 2 Tim. ii. 19; and 2 Cor. vi. 16—18, "and others, which teach, it is said, that the saints of God should separate themselves from the professing Church, because of the evil and ruin which indeed we all sorrowfully feel to be there." (p. 10.)

But *who* has said that saints "should separate themselves from the professing Church?" We have *not* left the professing Church at all. We found some things we used to do were evil, and we ceased to do them; we learnt there were other things it was well to do, and these we are now learning to do. Are we mistaken in either? Is it possible you are under the impression that to separate from the Establishment, or from Dissent, is to separate from the professing Church? To meet as "Brethren" do, in the Lord's name, is not in the least degree to separate from that Church, but to do what every disciple ought to do in it. Nobody does or can separate from the professing Church, except an open apostate.

I am sorry you find no guidance in this matter from the first two passages, for they are both full of light: that from the Old Testament, as a general principle of conduct for the individual; that from the New Testament, as expressly directing the Christian in a day of disorder such as ours. It is ridiculous to say that if a man really acts as Isaiah i. 16, 17 directs, he can fall from one evil into a greater. For the word is, "cease to do evil"—not some one, but all evil. As long as that divine oracle is heard, evil, greater or less, is avoided. And what is this "greater evil?" "Refusing communion with those whom Jesus loves," &c. But there, again, are you not at fault? We receive *every* Christian walking as such, without reference to their connexion with Nationalism or Dissent; we rejoice to have communion with them, whether privately or publicly. They may join us in the worship and the supper of the Lord; they are as

free as any of us to help in thanksgiving, prayer, or a word of edification, if so led of God; and this, without stipulation either to leave their old associations or to meet only with us. Where is this done save only among "Brethren?" Were any of us, no matter how gifted of the Lord, to give out a hymn, to pray, or minister at St. John's Church, when you take the sacrament, the Canons (*not* Scripture) would treat it as indecent and disorderly; and so would it be, as far as I am aware, in any of the Dissenting sects, except by special courtesy. With us, on the contrary, if any godly Churchman or Dissenter thought fit to come when we remember the Lord together, he would be quite in order, if he did any or all of these things spiritually; and this, not from any mere permission on our part, but as a matter of responsibility to God and His Word. Which, then, is guilty of "the evil of refusing communion with those whom Jesus loves?" Certainly not we. If you mean that I, for one, would refuse, (not to have communion with God's children anywhere in a holy scriptural way, but) to join in the services of the Establishment, that is a very different question, and not a sin, in my judgment, but a duty to God, as I have already proved even on your own principles.

Next, 2 Tim. ii. 19—22 instructs, not so much, like 1 Tim., how to maintain order in the house of God, as how to walk when disorder reigns there. The primary comfort is the immutably sure foundation of God, its seal presenting, on the divine side,*the sovereignty of the Lord who knows them that are His, and, on the human obverse, the responsibility of every one who names Christ's name, to depart from iniquity. Here, then, is the absolute obligation of the Christian to separate from evil in every shape. But we have that which is still more precise. The Christian profession was now like "a great house," having in it vessels, some to honour and some to dishonour. The jealousy of a saint to preserve unity might become a snare for his soul and a compromise of Christ's moral glory. Hence the Holy Ghost gives no uncertain sound, and leaves us not to speculation or self-will, but proclaims that holiness is still the only principle on which God maintains His unity. "If a man, therefore, *purge himself from these*, (i. e., from the vessels to dishonour,) he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." You have neglected this.

scripture. You have allowed Satan to take advantage of your own glaring misconstruction of the parable of the tares, (of which more anon,) so as to fall into the fatal mistake that God would have us abide in fellowship with evil, practically, and in principle too, rather than break a unity which is no longer holy but an outrage on His character, as falsely pretending to be His. Important as it is to flee *also* youthful lusts, worldliness, and every other personal evil, it is not enough. We are bound *not* to join as Christians with those who profess the name of Christ but dishonour Him; we are bound by the Word not to have vessels to dishonour "in the same communion with us," (p. 35,) but to purge ourselves from them, and to follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, not with the world calling itself Christian, but "with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." To walk and worship with those who are evidently of the world, and have not a pure heart wherewith to call on the Lord, is a sin, it may be of ignorance, but without doubt a sin, which places us at variance with His Word, and proves we are so far indifferent to His glory—a sin so much the darker in proportion to our fancied light.

In vain you plead such texts as "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged;" "Speak not evil one of another, brethren," and the like. It is not *we* that judge, but the Word of the Lord, if it be rightly divided and applied. If you are at ease in your conscience, you have as little reason to feel sore, as I feel because of anything in your tract. Fully do I allow that we ought never to suspect evil nor to impute motives that are not apparent; and if any of the "Brethren" err in this way, they are as guilty as their neighbours, and indeed, more so. But all this, as far as it is true, is mere individual failure, and, alas! too abundant everywhere. To point a controversy by means of it, evinces, I think, not a little poverty in the way of substantial scriptural argument.

2 Cor. vi. 16—18, you say, (p. 11,) "teaches that the Church should come out and be separate from the world;" but this is the very thing *we* are doing, and the very thing the Establishment forbids your doing, since it commands "every parishioner" to communicate, and yourself to receive them at the communion. "It has nothing to do with the saints of God coming out and being separate from the professing Church, because of evil that may have come in there. God has shown His mind and will on this latter

point." (*ib.*) He has indeed shown it, and it is "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." And is it not "iniquity" for one who doubts, dislikes, and disbelieves much in the Prayer-Book, to declare his unfeigned assent and consent to all and everything prescribed, sacraments, rites, ceremonies, consecrations, &c.? Do I hear some excusing themselves that they are the laity and can be silent? Hear Lord Shaftesbury at the last meeting of the Pastoral Aid Society: "I, too, have signed the Articles; I, too, am a subscriber to what is contained in the Prayer-Book, just as much as the clergy are subscribers to it; I do, as a layman, everything that the clergy do, with the exception of the administration of the sacraments, and I take my full share of responsibility along with them." This is honest and plain-spoken: if it were felt in general by Anglican Christians, how many everywhere would cease to trifle with their consciences and depart from that which they know to be "iniquity!" As to your notion that we apply 2 Cor. vi. to saints quitting the professing Church, it is, I repeat, all a mistake. We are quite as much in it as ever we were: only we no longer do what we have discovered to be opposed to the Word, and we are endeavouring to walk in all respects in conformity with it as a whole. Again, we must not limit the passage in 2 Cor. vi. to saints "separating from the world;" for it not only forbids peremptorily every measure of association individually and corporately, in divine things, between Christians and the worldly, (which "Brethren" hold but the Establishment denies,) but it insists, for all who are separate and in the relation of God's sons and daughters, that they should cleanse themselves from *all* filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

But I must also make a remark, noticing in the next page (12) the constantly recurring illusion that it is a question of "separation from the professing Church." You evidently mean by that phrase the Establishment and the Protestant bodies in this and other countries; though your reasoning in general assumes the narrow bounds of your own system. But what of the Greeks, Nestorians, Copts, Abyssinians, &c.? Are they separate from the professing Church? The English Dissenters *ought to be*, one would think, by your logic, above all others; for they certainly separated themselves from the Establishment, and are running a race of rivalry with it. They were utterly wrong, on your showing;

but as far as I can make out your singularly incoherent theory, *these* opposing systems are not excluded from "the professing Church" any more than your own. For the Roman Catholics, however, it is plain, you have as little mercy as they have for you. Theirs are damnable heresies, say you in language as unmeasured as the decrees of Trent. (p. 12.) "Roman Catholics, &c., do not receive the Word of God !! so they are not in the kingdom of God !!!" (p. 25.) Had you qualified your sweeping charge somewhat, had you accused them of overlaying, and to an immense extent evacuating, the Word of God by their traditions, I could have gone thus far with you. But it is false ground to deny absolutely that they receive the Word of God, and, if possible, worse to affirm that they are not in the kingdom, either as wheat or as tares.

My dear brother, bear with me if I tell you, in the plainest terms, you have thoroughly misunderstood the parable; and this misunderstanding forms the staple of your pamphlet, and has misled you to fight against as weighty a duty as any can be for a Christian.

I do not believe that you abhor the evils and errors of Romanism more than I do; but it is a calumny to say that Roman Catholics do not receive the atonement and priesthood of Christ—"not even professedly!" It is contrary to the plainest and surest facts; nay, even to your own Article xix., which owns its profession, calling it "the Church of Rome," though of course erring both in living and ceremonies, and also in matters of faith: an article which you have solemnly pledged yourself to take literally and grammatically. Hence your own Hooker, whom you cite approvingly, writes, in this far more correctly than you, "If by external profession they be Christians, then are they of the visible Church of Christ, and Christians by external profession they are all, whose mark of recognizance hath in it those things which we have mentioned, yea, although they be impious heretics, persons excommunicable, yea, and cast out for notorious improbity." This he says with express reference to Matt. xiii. (Eccles. Pol. b. iii., § 1.) What is of more consequence, the parable is itself against you; for the tares were the produce, not of the good seed corrupted merely, but of the evil sowing of the devil. Your denial that unconverted Roman Catholics, or heretics, are tares in the kingdom of heaven is, therefore, against the scripture commented on, not to speak of your

own best divines. For there were *two* sorts of seeds, and not the good seed of the word only, as your reasoning supposes. Those divinely quickened in Romanism, as in Protestantism, are the fruit of the good seed; and wicked professors there, as everywhere, are set forth by the tares, the result of the enemy's seed. Your premises and deductions are equally baseless.

In short, the explanation is as narrow and unsound as possible: on this point no Papist ever put forth worse. And why, readers may inquire, why such a departure from the sense ordinarily and rightly given to the tares? Why deny that they include "the children of the wicked one," without restriction; within the entire range of Christendom—that is, all the wicked who are baptized and outside the heathen, Jews and Mahometans? Why are Romanists, for instance, refused a place, even as tares, in the kingdom?

The reason is obvious. You allow distinctly that "the only true way of witnessing against Roman Catholicism, &c., is by immediate and entire *separation*." But, then, if separation from Romanists is right, and yet they are outwardly in Christendom or the scene of the kingdom of heaven, your interpretation is ruined, and the pillar of your reasoning against the "Brethren" crumbles into dust. For if godly and ungodly Romanists are in the field of christian profession, (no less than godly and ungodly Protestants, so-called "Plymouth Brethren" and all,) it follows that we may all grow together in the field, and yet some of us may lawfully be in "separation immediate and entire" from others. If it be consistent with the Lord's word that Protestants should have a different ecclesiastical communion from Romanists, it may be, as far as this injunction goes, equally consistent for Dissenters to be apart from the Establishment, and I add, for "Brethren" to stand aloof from all, if all have more or less deserted the scriptural ground of christian fellowship. Thus the argument, drawn from secession from Rome to seceding from every other form of iniquity, remains wholly unimpaired. Nothing can justify a Christian's owning that to be a Church of God which is not; and that the Establishment is not God's Church, but fundamentally different from it, flows even from what you concede to be God's essential abiding principles for His Church—unity with all saints, and separation from the world. These *are* our principles, not those of the Establishment, nor of Dissent.

This, then, demonstrates how far you are entitled to speak disparagingly of the view given of the parable of the tares in the Bible Treasury for March, 1862. It is you who have wholly missed its meaning, not that paper. For what the Lord therein forbade was *not* the effort of His servants to make a collective testimony (p. 15) of God's children, apart from the children of the wicked one, (which *is* the unity of the saints, separate from the world—the very thing you have yourself over and over confessed to be the will of God, and ever to be held fast.) He interdicted their gathering up the tares, i.e., their forcible removal from the field, or, as I have explained it, their extermination. All hold that the enemy sowed tares among the wheat; (I never doubted nor concealed it for a moment;) nor does the reiteration of a fact which lies on the surface of the words modify my view in the slightest degree. All hold that the reason alleged by our Lord, for refusing to sanction the servants' gathering up the tares, was lest they should root up the wheat also with them. This, too, I should have thought was too obvious to require special mention in a paper which gave only select notes of a lecture. Add these points to what was there said, expand them as you may, so that it be done truthfully, and the interpretation I have given is altogether untouched.

But *your* view is due to a total neglect of the Lord's explanation, and leads you to contradict the plainest Scriptures elsewhere, as well as the principles you lay down and urge so often in your tract. I will not spend time in taking up strange statements, such as your seeming doubt whether the tares were sown in the field. "From whence then *hath it tares?*" I should treat with the utmost indulgence mere incidental flaws where the main thought was of God. But I am forced to express my decided judgment that you have preferred darkness to light, in this instance at least: why, the Lord will judge.

Omitting detail, then, I ask where is the evidence that the parable applies to ecclesiastical fellowship? You have taken this for granted without attempting a proof; and I altogether deny it. In fact, the beginning and middle of your tract are at open war; and one, if true, destroys the other. For, in p. 22, without the least reason given for applying the wheat-and-tare-field to the subject of church fellowship, you actually thence infer, that it would injure the saints of God, "if they attempted to separate from the

children of the devil!" In pp. 4-6, the saints *were* to be separated from the children of this world; it was "very plain in the Word," "the will of God" and "to be held fast." But, in pp. 21-27, "His saints are not now to attempt it." "The Saviour forbids any separation to be made." Is it not rather too bad, within the same sheet, to declare, with equal strength, that the *same thing is, and is not*, the will of the Lord? When you begin, the separation of the saints from the world is a "plain truth" of God; as you advance, the very same thing is a mere delusion of the "Brethren!" "*No separation is the way of obedience!*" (p. 27.)

The answer to all this is very simple, and the Lord has given it: "*the field is THE WORLD.*" Hooker says (in the same book and section which I have already quoted) "*His Church he compareth unto a field;*" but he is wrong. The field is not the Church but the world. You have avoided the open statement of that error, but you have fallen into it only so much the more deeply, because unconsciously. The parable implies, that the tares were clearly seen to be tares, when fruit was brought forth, though not before. Here, then, are the tares, not merely left quietly in the world, but, on your view, known as tares in the assemblies or in the Church. In the parable, there is, of course, no question of gathering up the wheat, but only the tares, i. e., children of the wicked one, no longer hidden, but now apparent to the servants. Notwithstanding, there is no permission to deal even with the most evident or aggravated cases of evil; but, contrariwise, a decisive veto put by our Lord on every attempt to root them out. Apply this, as you do, to their growing together in the Church, and discipline is necessarily at an end; for, as you triumphantly answer, "it is written *again*, let them both grow TOGETHER until the harvest?" Of all imaginable schemes of Church-fellowship, this is, I venture to say, the most preposterous. It is contrary to Scripture; for St. Paul insists that we are to judge *them that are within*, and that *the wicked person* is to be put away. It is contrary to the Rubric, which warrants the rejection of a notorious evil-doer, or scandalous person. It is contrary to your own admission that discipline should take cognizance of the ways of professors. The unvarnished, inevitable result of your interpretation of the parable is, to set aside all discipline, whether scriptural or Anglican. For who, under any circumstances, can be

put *out of* the Church, if both good and bad are to grow together *in it* till the harvest or the end of the world?

But *where* were both sown? Even if we were not expressly informed what "the field" is, it would be a question requiring proof, and you could not be permitted to assume that the Church was meant; for the tares would have grown together with the wheat in the world, if there had been no such thing as the gathering together of the saints at all. But the Lord's explanation leaves your gloss without excuse: for your reasoning is really directed against *His* interpretation, without your knowing it, because you understand that to be *the Church* which He declares is "the world." In fact, not a word is said about the Church, as such, in the parable. For the wheat are simply the genuine Christians, individually considered; and this would have been true, had there never been such a corporate institution as God's assembly. The real question is about the field, i. e. the world, as the scene where the Lord had been sowing, and the enemy too. Hence those who apply it either to the sanctioned mixture of saints and sinners in church-communion or to the prohibition of church-discipline, have wholly and most mischievously lost their way and are really setting their own perversion of the parable against the plainest evidence of other scriptures. My interpretation harmonizes what you dislocate, and falls in with the Word in general; for I have taught and still teach, that, comparing 1 Cor. v. with Matt. xiii., the true and twofold meaning is, (not that wicked persons are *not* to be put out, and that they *are* to be put out, which is mere nonsense, and setting Scripture against Scripture, but) that wicked persons *are not* to be put *out of the world*, while they *are* to be put *out of the Church*. If this seems unintelligible to you, it is because you have mystified yourself through confounding the two spheres. To gather up the tares means extermination, or at least violence as to the world, not excommunication from the Church. The dilemma (p. 28) is therefore imaginary. For wicked professors may doubtless exist in Christendom (i. e., the field of the kingdom) without being accredited in the assembly (i. e., the Church.)

You wonder (p. 29) at the view that rooting up the tares means killing or injuring the pseudo-Christians. Are you aware that the famous Archbishop John Chrysostom, the greatest light of the Greek Church, gives just the same in his forty-seventh Homily on St. Matthew? Moreover, the

ablest of Protestant controversialists answers your argument, drawn from the parable by his Popish adversary, precisely as I am replying to you: "Our blessed Saviour foretold, you say, that there should be in the Church tares with choice corn. Look again, I pray, and you shall see that the field He speaks of is not the Church, but *the world*: and therefore neither do you obey our Saviour's command, 'Let both grow up till the harvest,' who teach it to be lawful to root these tares (such are heretics) out of the world: neither do Protestants disobey it, if they eject manifest heresies and notorious sinners out of the Church." (Religion of Protestants, ch. v., part 1, § 57.) I had read neither the ancient nor the modern author, when I wrote the tract you refer to (p. 31) as containing substantially the same explanation which satisfies me still. If you were not convinced before, I am not without hope that enough is said now to satisfy you that, in uniting as saints, separate from the world, (of which you certainly should not complain,) we in no way transgress our Lord's injunction in Matt. xiii.; for what He forbids is *not* such a separation, but the attempt to root or expel false professors out of Christendom, which is very far from our wish or thought. Leaving them to abide therein undisturbed, we nevertheless purge ourselves from the vessels to dishonour, and follow the will of the Lord with them that call on Him out of a pure heart. Are you doing the same? To us both duties seem clear and consistent.

In truth, Protestants, as well as Romanists and early Catholics, widely departed from His mind as laid down in the parable. When such as professed to be Christ's servants handed over reputed heretics or other spiritual offenders to be punished externally, they did precisely what is for the present forbidden. Augustine made this mistake in a measure, when he urged the authorities to chastise the factious Donatists; and Gratian carried it out still more thoroughly. Well meant as this was, it was ignorance of the character which the kingdom assumes through Christ's rejection, and during His session at God's right hand; it was a slip into earthly righteousness, out of the patience of heavenly grace. The value of our Lord's warning became apparent when the Waldenses, &c., were persecuted to death; for here was the extirpation of at least some wheat in the blind zeal which strove to get rid of the tares. It is not for the servants, but for the angels of the Son of

man, to execute destructive judgment on mere nominal Christians. This is the point in hand: not keeping the unconverted, or purging the wicked, out of the Church, which is quite right; but the application of power to remove those accounted spurious professors of Christ from the world, which is quite wrong. In the end of the age the tares are burned and the wheat shines forth in glory. It is an outward, judicial dealing with the tares, (which the Lord forbids to us,) not the putting away of evil-doers from the assembly of the faithful (which the Holy Ghost enjoins.)

Again, it was from not seizing the truth conveyed here and elsewhere that some of the Reformers erred greatly in essaying to enforce the kingdom of God on Jewish principles. Thus, in the sixteenth century, not only were many burnt and imprisoned in England for alleged dogmatic evil, but also some flagrant cases occurred at Geneva under Calvin's dictation. It is needless to enlarge on the Puritans, long after, and their excesses; or on the Scottish Presbyterians, whose desires, and deeds, with a similar end in view, are notorious. The penal statutes, till lately in force in our own country, bear witness to the same general tendency. In fact, it is the danger, not of Christians who seek by the grace of God to keep themselves separate from the world and pure, but of all who adopt the world as the ground of their ecclesiastical system, which they must next render compulsory by law: sorrowful contrast to the Spirit's action in the Church of God!

You admit that "the parable has nothing whatever to do with Church discipline." (p. 23.) But your application deprives discipline of its legitimate exercise, unless you can prove that neither wheat nor tares fall into sins which require exclusion. For, on the one hand, if the tares so sin and are to be put away, what becomes of your famous argument in pp. 20-26? "Is a separation to be attempted? 'Nay,' saith the Master." If, on the other hand, you confess that the exclusion of the wicked from the assembly perfectly consists with the growing together of the wheat and tares in the same field, your reasoning utterly breaks down: in this case you are forced to own the truth I am contending for.* Whereas, if tares and wheat grow to-

* What can one think of the argument (p. 23) that as the saint must carry the body of death with him whereby he is burdened, "so, it may be, the saints of God must (!) have the presence of those who are not of God in their assemblies?" "Know ye not that your bodies are members of Christ?" Are "those who are not of God" members of Christ likewise? The Catechism

gether in the Church, the rule would be absolute and final, that discipline can exclude *neither*; for both are to grow together till the harvest.

Your use of Rev. ii. and iii., (pp. 15—18, 32) is the common resource of men in your circumstances, but it is as clearly wrong as your uncommon view of the tares with its portentous consequences. And for this plain reason. The seven assemblies in Asia, spite of the evil found in nearly all, were really *churches*. They were gatherings of saints or of those believed to be such, separate from the world, into some of which Satan had succeeded in introducing more or less grave evils. Now, in such a state of things, we entirely agree that separation would be schism and grievously sinful: for the entrance of evil, let it be ever so flagrant, into a scripturally-constituted assembly of saints, does not at all furnish a just cause for separating, but rather for patient prayerful looking to God for grace, wisdom, and power of the Spirit for oneself, and one's brethren, that the unclean thing, doctrinal or practical, should be dealt with, and, if need be, the evil-doer put away according to the Word of God. The Lord did not, could not, blame His saints for continuing in these churches. On the contrary, He warned them of the evils that were there and of His judgment if they repented not. No amount of evil that may come in calls for separation, until the assembly refuses to hear the Word of the Lord and to judge that which is offensive to Him. While the door is open for holy Scriptural discipline, a saint is bound to stay. Your fallacy, then, is in arguing from real assemblies of God to such a body as the Establishment; which, I have sufficiently shown, never was a church of God according to the sole Scriptural principle, practice, and history. What were we to do when convinced that the association, calling itself the Church of England, is not, and had never been, a gathering of saints in the unity of the body, separate from the world, and subject only to the Lord by the Word and Spirit of God? How could we, how can you, plead for continuance in that which never was on the same basis as the Asiatic Churches?

In few words, nationalism has no more claim than a dissenting society (less in outward form perhaps) to assume

says so, but what says the Scripture? "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" Are the tares the same? A tare is Satan's child: is your body his child? So the Gnostics used to hold; but your heart, I trust, will repudiate the error, at the expense of the reasoning.

to be a Church of God as Scripture presents it. Schism is separation from the Church, not from nationalism or dissent. If they are both alien from Scripture, they have no claim upon my allegiance or yours. As Christians, we owe it to our Lord to meet according to His will, withdrawing from all that hinders it. Of the Evangelical Alliance, I need say no more than that it is a mere expedient, and does not even profess to take the ground of God's Church, though it is an amiable institute in its way.

From Mr. Darby's lectures on the Seven Churches you have gathered the thought, adopted by many Christians at various times, that, besides the primary application to the literal Asiatic Churches, a complete picture is furnished of the responsible professing body from St. John's day till the close. Hereupon you raise the old cry that there is no direction to come *out* of the professing Church, but blessing promised to individuals *in it*. We have no thought, in fact, of separating from Christendom, in which we *all* are *equally*; and we hold strenuously, that, wherever there is an assembly of God, (i. e., formed from its origin according to His Word, and still cleaving to that ground,) its miserably low condition would not call for separation, but persevering, devoted service, and waiting on God for a remedy. But you cannot hence make out a duty of remaining in an association which, never having been a gathering of saints according to Scripture, has no just claim to a single Christian.

Moreover, the argument is singularly unhappy, if judged by that view which, to you, "appears the correct one." For, on the protracted scheme of the Apocalyptic churches, Thyatira gives us Popery under the symbol of Jezebel; and you have yourself strongly and repeatedly insisted on the Christian's separation from *that* unclean thing. If, therefore, the epistle to Thyatira forbids not to come out from this evil, the other epistle cannot be said to bind us up with evils elsewhere, when remedy is refused and the godly, if they abide, must do or sanction that which is, in their eyes, false and iniquitous. I entirely coincide with you that to stay in communion with Romish error is to lose all power for witnessing. Why should it be a virtue to stay in communion with that which we account Protestant error? In either case, it would be heartless indifference to truth and holiness. On the scheme you accept, Popery has a place in these churches, prophetically viewed quite as much as a national Establishment; and if it be

right, as you own, to separate from Popery, spite of no command from the Lord to Thyatira, it cannot be wrong to separate from nationalism because of no such command to Sardis or Laodicea. That which decides its right or wrong is the answer to the question:—Is nationalism according or opposed to God's Word about His Church? If the answer be clearly against it, would it not be well to bear in mind the maxim, "Non est faciendum malum vel minimum, ut eveniat bonum vel maximum?" But when conscience does not keep pace with knowledge, let it be ever so scanty, and when faith does not work by love to silence alike fears and cavils, farewell to a happy, thorough testimony for Christ.

As to page 32, I need hardly add that there is no analogy between the ecclesiastical evil of which you make so light and the state of things contemplated in the epistle of Jude. Nobody contends that the faithful should leave a true gathering or church of God, even if hypocrites have contrived to enter privily; on the contrary, those are bound, spite of these, to remain and build up themselves on their most holy faith. But it is never a duty to countenance the world with Christians intermixed, as God's church, nor to maintain, under any circumstances, a known error as His truth. If you say (p. 33,) "there is no message to or promised blessing from the Lord for a separate gathering of saints who have come out from the professing Church," I reply, first, that we do *not* come out from the professing Church, but from certain evils in it, which is a plain and necessary duty; and that, secondly, in the Scriptures referred to, there is no message nor blessing from the Lord ~~EXCEPT~~ for a separate gathering of saints who have come out from the world. To recognize and act on this, is, I affirm, the path of obedience, and obligatory on all Christians. For saints involved in evil principles and practices to say either "There is no hope" or "I have not sinned," (Jer. ii.) betrays in both cases the evil heart of unbelief, and is condemned, not justified, in the Word of God. It is to be Antinomians corporately if not individually also. "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

Yours faithfully in Christ,

W. K.