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WHAT IS A CHURCH ?

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HAVING felt constrained by a regard to truth to withdraw from the Ministry of the National Establishment, I am anxious to lay before those whom I love as Brethren in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who continue in connection with it, the reasons of my resolve. I am more especially desirous to bring them before my Brethren who faithfully preach the Gospel under the protection of the Establishment; earnestly desiring that they may be led to examine and see whether these things be as I have said. 'Buy truth and sell it not,' is a maxim worthy of our serious attention; and truth is cheaply purchased by the surrender of all worldly influence, which obstructs rather than favours the Spirit of God.

Many, I am persuaded, have felt with myself the difficulties, difficulties of conscience, which continually present themselves in the performance of Ministerial duties. We have been used to get over these difficulties by the authority one of the other; to think that good and conscientious men must have sufficient reason for bearing with them; and thus to take the easier way of falling in with general practice, than of incurring the odium of singularity. Much, therefore, as I feel the responsibility incurred by an individual, who acts upon his own private judgment in opposition to those whom he has been accustomed to acknowledge as his Ecclesiastical superiors, yet as soon as he is convinced that he has been implicated with evil, and that the tolerance of *any evil* is contrary to the mind of Christ, his course is determined by another greater than himself—his decision must be upon principles entirely apart from calculations of expediency or consideration of consequences.

I need not enter into any detail as to the distressing position in which a Minister of the Church of England is placed, in the indiscriminate use of the Baptismal,

Burial, and Communion offices. The evil is acknowledged by all who have given the subject a serious thought. But in anxiously endeavouring to discover some remedy for the evil, and relief for my own conscience, I have been led to the firm conviction that none is to be expected. By the controlling power of the Civil over the Canon law, every thing like discipline in the Church of England has been broken down. Hence there is, I conceive, a fault in the principle of the Church of England. If in practice only she were defective, there would be found a remedial power in her to put it away; otherwise the defect must be in her constitution.—And to this conclusion I have been led. That which at first presented itself in the shape of practical evil, affecting my conscience, now appears the result of a defect in principle; and it is because I believe the Church of England to be fundamentally wrong in its principle, that I can no longer exercise the ministry of the Gospel within her pale.

In pursuing a painful inquiry, although evil after evil has forced itself into notice, the question really to be decided is, whether the Church of England has in truth any claim to the title of ‘a Church.’ This must be answered by another, ‘What is a Church?’ And here I must distinctly state, that the study of God’s word in its plain and literal meaning, since I have been delivered from receiving for doctrines the commandments of men, has made me exceedingly jealous of antiquity and tradition, unless based on the Word of God. Indeed I hardly know how to express my sense of the blessing of possessing in the Word of God an unerring standard of appeal. I must confess that in the progress of my inquiry I have been often staggered by the thought—can this be right when so many of the Lord’s people and Masters in Israel have not seen it? But I find in the word of God the corrective for this—in the assertion of its own unchangeableness; ‘Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away;’ and in the testimony it affords to the tendency of the human mind to supersede the necessity of continual reference to it, by reliance on other authority. Accordingly, when He who knew what was in man, assigned the reason of

Jewish Apostacy, it was this:—"that they had made the word of God of none effect through their traditions." It would have been well if Gentile Churches had profited by the warning, but it is the refusal to recognize the word of God as the sole standard of appeal in the attempts which have hitherto been made to remove difficulties in the way of tender consciences, that has made every such attempt abortive. It is on this principle also that we are enabled to account for the fact, that the same Reformers who luminously explained and defended the truths respecting individual salvation, left the Liturgy and Church discipline imperfect or neglected. It was because in contending for the former truths, they used the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; whereas, in compiling the Liturgy, they appealed to *tradition, antiquity, and Church authority*—and seemed very jealous of rejecting any thing that had been once established, unless actually opposed to God's word. They were guided rather by the principle of comprehending the Popish feeling of the people, than consulting the tenderness of conscience of others. In the attempts after their time, whilst the Non-Conformists pleaded the important principle so clearly laid down, (Rom. xiv.) that no authority can impose that which Christ has left indifferent in itself as a term of Communion; the party in authority pleaded precedent and Church authority, so that in the Savoy Conference, after the fairest promises on the part of the King, the Commission only empowered those nominated, "to compare the Common Prayer-Book with the most ancient Liturgies that had been used in the Church," &c. thus virtually excluding any reference to the word of God.

It is, therefore, by the authority of the Word that I would now try the Church of England. We have been too much accustomed to consider the Articles and Symbols of a Church as the Church itself; and have thus given considerable advantage to the Papist, in almost relinquishing the idea of a visible Church. This has been carried to great excess both within and without the pale of the Establishment; so that even men whose minds have been accustomed to rest on the glories of

the invisible Church, have almost forgotten the nature and object of a visible Church on earth.

A Church is a congregation of "faithful men;" it is an assembly of Believers united in fellowship according to the commandments of Christ.—Such was the Church at Ephesus. They are addressed by the Apostle as the faithful in Christ Jesus; not those who made a nominal profession, but those who by the power of the Holy Spirit, had been convinced of sin, quickened from their death in trespasses, brought to know that they have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins through the blood of the Cross, and who manifested, by their blameless conversation, that the end of the grace vouchsafed was unto good works, which God had before ordained that they should walk in them. Wherever such a body is gathered, there a Church exists: a body so separate from the world that the world can recognize the separation.

If it be asked, how a Church is to be preserved in this state of separation?—I answer, by the power of discipline; which is a corporate power of pronouncing authoritatively on the conduct of the individuals who compose the body. The Corinthian Church affords us an example. We find the solemn judgment of the whole body under the power of the Spirit of Christ exercised in the exclusion of an unworthy Member, by which he is again subjected to the power of Satan, from which he had been rescued on his admission into the fold of Christ.

The remedial and sanatory power of discipline is not the power of the world exercised in taking vengeance and executing wrath upon him that doeth evil—it proceeds from another Spirit, which is of God. Although liable to be abused by Man; and, unless its end be distinctly kept in view, tending to Sectarianism and spiritual pride, yet it is a power which the Church cannot discontinue to exercise without becoming unfaithful, corrupt, and finally ceasing to be a Church at all.

Had the Corinthians not complied with the Apostle's injunction, he would himself have used the rod against those who were puffed up. (1 Cor. iv. 19, 21.) And thus by diminishing the number, have increased the

strength of the Church, by preserving her purity. But discipline was exercised with a salutary effect not only on the individual who did the wrong, but also on the whole body, by inducing "such a carefulness, indignation, clearing of themselves, and zeal," &c. (2 Cor. vii. 11) as proved to the Apostle that they were awakened to a proper sense of their responsibility. The value of such discipline as regarded the body is strikingly marked in the Apostle's words—"It was not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong; but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you. (2 Cor. vii. 12.) "Purge out the old leaven that ye may be a new lump."

And why is this purity so important? In order that they who believe, being arrayed in the garments of righteousness which Christ giveth, may fill the place which He intended them to occupy.

As long as He was in the world, He was the Light of the world. He came to manifest the world's darkness, and the world was affected by His testimony, because it was the *living* testimony of one who was holy, harmless, and undefiled, and altogether separate from themselves. He was not of the world, therefore He was fitted to bear witness against the world that the works thereof are evil.

And when He departed, having proved the Apostasy of the world by their rejection of Him (John xii. 31), He placed believers in the responsible situation which He had left—"And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world." "A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." "Ye are the salt of the earth." And let it be observed, that it is not an isolated testimony of individuals, but the manifested union of many, to which the words of the Lord refer—"Holy Father keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are. That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me and I in thee, *that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me*" (John xvii. 11, 21),—as if the truth of the Saviour's Mission was allowed to depend for its proof on the manifested union of his disciples. Accordingly, the Lord's Supper was instituted

as the test and manifestation of their Oneness in Him.

Here, indeed we see how the Church is "the pillar and ground of the truth." The witness in the world is not the Bible, but the Church. A book is not capable of *forcing* its testimony upon the world, but a Church *informed* by the word through the Spirit is—whatever its members be, whether it be gathered in Jerusalem, Antioch, Paris, or London. It was a Church that the Apostle thus addressed—"That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life."

To trace the declension of the Churches from the purity in which they were first exhibited in Asia and in Greece, is not my present object; nor to show how identification with the world, under the fostering hand of kingly power, effected what persecution and heresy had failed to accomplish. It is sufficient, at present, to try the Church of England by the standard which we have established. In theory, the Church of England possesses the power of Discipline, of which the Rules are embodied in the 139 Canons prepared by Convocation in 1603, and which in their ratification by King James, are commanded "*to be diligently observed, executed, and equally kept by all his subjects in this kingdom;*" and to these the Clergy are by law, responsible. Many of these are arbitrary enactments opposed to the spirit of the Gospel, many trivial and unimportant, and almost all needless and calculated to burthen the consciences of sincere believers—so that in theory, the Church of England is one of the most sectarian of all communions. Secondly, the power of judgment, according to this exceptionable rule, is not allowed to be exercised by the body to which the offender may belong, but is vested in the hands of some distant officer, appointed by the Bishop as his law agent. The sentence of Excommunication (so closely are the world and the Establishment united) involves not the loss of Christian brotherhood and sympathy, but the loss of civil privileges; so that an excommunicated person cannot "*serve upon juries, cannot be a witness in any court, cannot bring an action to recover claims, either real or personal, due*

to him." (Blackstone, book iii. c. 7.) It is enough to mention this. A Church, which could have recourse to such a power, must have lost all sense what a Church ought to be, and proves itself not to be of Christ, but of the world. A few men first take upon themselves to bind the consciences of their fellow men, according to the conceits of their own minds, and then if their enactments be in one tittle violated, give the offender over to be tormented and punished by the powers of the world. Such is the Church of England in theory, and such it was in practice in the days of its early prelates.

But it is said, the mild spirit of the Church of England has remedied this evil. It is indeed true, that she has lost all power of discipline, by being submitted to the authority of the civil courts; so that, whilst she remains theoretically the closest of communions, in practice she embraces all. But can it be said, in any sense, that her communion is a communion of saints? Her sin, as a Church, is the giving up her communion to the world—and yet it is in this sin that we have been accustomed to seek our arguments for the excellence of the Church of England in practice. That which lays open her communion to the Non-conformist, lays it equally open to the thoughtless and profane; and thus the Church of England is necessarily drawn into the tolerance of evil, which Christ hateth, and has no means left her, as a body, of testifying against sin.

We have been so long accustomed to look at a Church merely as an *expedient* thing, and to view the Church of England as one adapted to the peculiarities of the nation, intertwining itself with all orders and degrees of men, that the idea of the reality and essentials of a Church is not usually brought before our mind. Regarding it merely as an instrument of utility, we look upon it as the best:—and if the question has been presented to the mind at all, it has generally turned on the comparison between it and other communions.

It has been forgotten that the office of Evangelist, as directed to individual salvation, is altogether subordinate and directed to this end, the fellowship of the saints; or in other words, that men are converted through the ministry of reconciliation, in order that they may be built a

spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Pet. ii. 5.) Besides the necessary connivance at sin, from which the Church of England, in her practical constitution cannot escape, there is another great evil—that by striving to attain *outward* uniformity, the greatest possible disorder is introduced. Men are brought together not on truth, but on artificial distinctions. Outward conformity is no hard thing to the flesh—and fearful temptations are held out to the flesh in the emoluments and honours of the Church in order to comply with it. The preaching of the truth and holiness of life are not *practically* the requisites for the Ministry in the Church of England. Let a man simply propound morality to his hearers—let him be a man of pleasure—yet so long as he is *orderly*, he is put out of the reach of authority to correct him. If in the annual returns of any Diocesan, the question was asked “Do you know of any souls won to Christ?” it would appear almost an impertinent question. All inquiry turns on that which meets the eye; and yet ministers are they who watch over souls. (Heb. xiii. 17.) The necessary result is that there is no approximation to uniformity of doctrine. The highest Calvinism, and the lowest Arminianism and Pelagianism, is alike preached from the pulpits of the Established Church. No inquiry is made as to truth, but only as to order. And to illustrate the practice of the Church of England yet further, we may instance the exercise of that discipline which remains in the hands of the Bishops of the Church of England. The suspension of a profligate or even heretical Minister, *if he be beneficed*, must be through a tedious legal process, attended with immense expense to the Bishop; so completely does the law of the land, which is in practice the law of the Church, look simply to outward things and the interest of the individual rather than that of the body. And yet the same Bishop has power, irresponsible power, to remove a stipendiary Curate (who is in the sight of the great Head of the Church as truly a Minister of the Gospel, as one who is beneficed) from his curacy, without assigning any reason, in direct violation of the Apostolic injunction.—“Against an Elder receive

not an accusation but before two or three witnesses." (1 Tim. v. 19.)

But it is said that a removal of existing abuses may be expected, and therefore it is a duty to wait and see if any thing can be done in the way of remedy, before taking so decisive a step as to separate entirely from the communion of the Church of England, much more from exercising the ministry in it. It may be replied, that it is not the act of Christian faithfulness to tolerate evil in the hope of a future and contingent remedy. But what remedy is to be expected? Something might be attempted either by the Houses of Parliament, the King's Commission, or the revival of the two Houses of Convocation. I would not inflict a wound on any Christian mind by entertaining even a possibility of any thing like Church Reform being effected by the legislature of the nation, composed as it is of Infidels, Socinians, and Papists. Most deeply do I regret that the Church of England should only present itself to public view in such a shape, as to be thought a fit subject for the control of Parliament, and be looked at only in its edifices and revenues. The idea of any thing being there done for the revival of discipline is not to be expected; since, with few exceptions, those who made the law, would be brought to feel its weight.

The other means of Reformation, viz. the King's Commission, and the assembling of the two Houses of Convocation, may well be considered together; since both must emanate from the same authority. The latter indeed appears to have presented itself to many pious men, as the most probable means of accomplishing their earnest desire after a better state of things, if it was allowed the power of free discussion, of revising the Liturgy and restoring discipline. The difference would be this—the King's Commission would be directed to some few high in Church Authority—the Houses of Convocation would consist of all the Dignitaries of the Church of England, and representatives from the Parochial Clergy. We could not hope to see remedial power vested in more favourable hands than these; who present themselves to the public in somewhat of a corporate capacity in the "Society for promoting Christian Know-

ledge." Their sentiments and qualifications may be in a measure judged of from the Tracts issued under the sanction of that Society, which are supposed to express the real doctrines of the Church of England. It is sufficient to notice that the general tendency of the Tracts is to render obscure that which the Articles have expressed so luminously as to a sinner's justification before God, through the one offering of the body of Christ. One quotation from a very popular school-book* will serve as a specimen.—

Question.—Wherein does the **SECOND COVENANT** differ from the **FIRST**, as to the mildness and mercy of it?

Answer.—Whereas a perfect and unsinning obedience was expected of our first parents upon pain of death, *we are only* required to use our honest and hearty endeavours to serve God and keep his commandments.

Such is the general tone of the Tracts, bringing down the Gospel to a remedial law, denying almost the need of the teaching of the Holy Ghost,—aiming at establishing a mere outward conformity, and enforcing the things of God by the law of the land. Any alterations to be expected from persons avowing such sentiments must be for the worse. And I must distinctly state, that the upholding this Society is helping to deny the truth of God. There is a manifest attempt to explain away the most comforting truths, and to render the language of Scripture vague and undefined. Such persons indeed might fit the Church Service for the use of aliens, but would at the same time deprive Christ's true flock of their consolations.

From these considerations I feel convinced that any reform in the Church of England, so as to render it a congregation of faithful men, is not to be expected from her present Constitution. I do not deny that much may be done in the way of removing outward abuses, but nothing can bring her into a Church position towards the world, in which she is not only entangled, but which even legislates for her. It is not that there are not individual Christians in her of the brightest character—it

* Crossman's Introduction, part II. § I.

is not that the Gospel of the GRACE of GOD is not preached in many of her pulpits: these are circumstances rather accidental than essential to her; but it is that while she calls herself "pure and Apostolical," there is no probable security for purity of doctrine, and every possible impediment to purity of practice. She is necessarily placed in the position of tolerating evil, which is quite contrary to the mind of Christ. (Rev. ii. 15.) The name indeed she bears, the position she occupies, the commanding talent of some, and deep piety of other of her members, the champions of the truth she has nurtured, are all circumstances which tend much to bewilder the mind and prevent the exercise of righteous judgment, till we have ascertained from the 'Authentic Record of the word, what a Church really is. But even then the bias of our minds is to set up the corruption, instead of the purity of the Church for our precedent. We shelter ourselves under the plea of the short duration of the Church's embodied lustre—we plead corruptions and declensions even in Apostolical times—and therefore sit down under the conviction which paralyzes all effort, that there is no hope, and thus rest content with evil. We first lay it down as an axiom that purity is not to be expected, and then act so as to prove its truth. Surely when we have the mind of Christ distinctly stated, that his people should be a peculiar people, not of the world, even as he was not of the world, it is the object for us to aim at; true it is a high aim, but is not the power of God's Spirit adequate to effect it?

Whatever may be our expectation as to the nearness of the Apostasy and our Lord's Advent, those assuredly will be found of him "in peace and blameless," who separate themselves from whatever they are taught by the Spirit to be displeasing to him, and unite together in Truth. In fact, almost all the arguments used by us for conniving at the acknowledged corruptions of the Church of England, have arisen from our looking to man for a remedy instead of to the Spirit of God. The moment the Church and the world came into union, the power of the Spirit visibly declined. How then shall

we expect its revival, except by separating from the world.—Nor can I forbear to testify against the Theological fiction which has been brought in to support the **NO-CHURCH SYSTEM**, and to keep us content with our lowness both in doctrine and in practice; viz. that now Christianity has obtained a footing in the world, it may be safely left for support to the ordinary powers of man, as if the presence of the Spirit of God was not the very soul of the Church: and who that allows His presence, will deny His power, whether in gifts or graces?—the division of which appears one of the most arbitrary Dogmas that man in his pride ever presumed to lay down. Unless, therefore, men are prepared to deny the presence of the Spirit in the Church, or to shew that it has been authoritatively withdrawn, it is mere unbelief to limit our desires to any thing short of the reality of what we know has existed. It is true that there is a difference between the essentials of Faith and matters of Discipline. Man's heart is ever the same, and therefore the truths respecting salvation are laid down with the greatest precision in the Word of God. In matters of Discipline, circumstances must be taken into the account; and we have only general principles to guide us. But then in a body gathered by the Spirit—there would be his power, and those gifts, ministrations, and operations, which are essential to its well-being as a body (1 Cor. xii. 4—6), which would readily apply general principles to existing circumstances. That which would at first appear the defect of a Church, in having no certain and invariable rules of Discipline laid down with legal precision, is in fact her very strength; because the presence of the Spirit is presumed for its due regulation, or it ceases to be a Church.—Man's wisdom would always fetter God's Spirit—but nothing more completely shows the folly of attempting **LEGAL** Discipline, than the Canons of the Church of England—which, if there was the power of enforcing them, would be quite inapplicable to present circumstances.

In arriving at the conclusion that the Church of England can with no propriety be called a Church according to the mind of Christ, I have been led to perceive that one powerful reason which has weighed on

our minds to tolerate the evil of the Establishment, has been the failure of those who have separated from it to exhibit any thing as a Church which could practically condemn it. We have seen enough of close communions to perceive their evil—and it is an evil of fearful magnitude to exclude brethren; it is a deep sin against the Spirit of God for any set of men, to bind not only themselves, but other and after generations to their own measure of light; so that those who do not come up to it, or those who go beyond it are equally put out. This is Sectarianism—a spirit of selfishness, which often ends in the sinful pride of saying, “The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord are we.” The moment we entrench ourselves within any system, whether as Churchmen, Baptists, or Quakers, we are brought into circumstances not to judge righteous judgment; and the *more conscientious* our regard to our respective systems, the greater our danger of doing “many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth” (Acts xxvi. 9), and of making men our masters by taking the rules and apologists of our systems instead of the Scriptures, for our guides.

The above reason, powerful in itself, is considerably strengthened by the spirit of modern non-conformity having become quite as worldly as that of the Established Church. It is no longer relief for tender consciences, nor liberty of declaring God’s truth fresh from the teaching of God’s Spirit, that is contended for—but the emoluments and honours of the world. How mightily has Satan prevailed. What a prospect for the Church in the beginnings of non-conformity!—But he brought in the world, and the Spiritual weapons were laid aside. The strength of the Non-conformists was their being disjoined from the world, and they were placed in the responsible station of shewing the superiority of that which was gathered together by the Spirit of Christ, over that which was united under the spirit of the world. But that opportunity has been lost, and I can say for myself, that nothing has made me so slow to act as the *political character* of modern Dissent. And if I was driven to a choice of evils, I would prefer the anomalous character of the Establishment still, since

from the very absence of Ministerial education and discipline, there is not so much prejudice against truth in it, as among those who have been trained systematically to contend only for that portion of it which others have seen. But I am persuaded, that a Christian never is placed in the position of choosing between two evils, except by his own faithlessness—and I would profit by the experience of the past. We have seen the attempt at a large comprehensive system to embrace a whole nation, fostered by the State, and in *theory* certainly beautiful and perfect, but entirely failing in its object to make the nation religious. God has borne with it—yea, in a measure, God has honoured it—He has also acted out a purpose in it, and has shewn that the wisdom of men only spoils whatever He may leave for a time in their hands. Again—we have separation from that system in many forms—more or less comprehensive in their communion, but having the same tendency—the moment they become established, the offence of the Cross ceases, and the world gets in; so that a man may be respected in his system as a consistent member, and true to the peculiarities of his body, who is yet unsound in the faith, and led by the spirit of the world. What then would be the result of the deliberations of men sound in the faith, enlightened by the Spirit to understand the present circumstances and requirements of the Church of Christ?—Their object must be to produce Unity. To effect this, nothing must be left by which the conscience of the weakest Believer might be needlessly offended:—no terms of Communion must be constituted by arbitrary enactments of man. The Believer who walks according to his profession, has a right to be received at the table of his Lord; and that body which establishes any other test than this, destroys the unity of the heavenly family, and is justly chargeable with the sin of schism. Let this principle be adopted in the Church of England, the 139 Canons would cease to be terms of Communion—the power of the Spirit would be no longer hindered by formularies, nor the consciences of Brethren affected by their compulsory use. Men would not be chosen to minister in holy things from the mere accident of *birth*.

or expensive education, but because they were fitted by the Spirit of the Lord to instruct and edify His body. The names of worldly honour would be abandoned, and he would be accounted worthy of love and reverence who took the oversight of the little flock, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. The Establishment then would cease to be *honoured* as the Church of England—but Believers within her would become formed into Churches of Christ.*

In conclusion, I would remind my Brethren that the present is not the Dispensation of Universality in effect, although its principle is of Universal application, viz. God dealing with men as SINNERS in a way of Grace. Hence this command—“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” But the Gentile Dispensation is described by the Apostle James, as only intended *to take out of them* a people for His name: and to this the words of our Lord agree—“the Gospel shall be preached as a *witness*.” If it be said, that these expressions are ambiguous, all ambiguity is removed by the plain declarations of other parts of Scripture respecting the iniquity of the latter day. For example, the state of the Gentiles at the close of this Dispensation, after the Gospel has been preached among them, is described in 2 Tim. iii. The language is almost the same as that employed Rom. i. to describe their flagitiousness and abominations before the Gospel was sent among them. Without recurring to facts, this alone is sufficient to prove that the *professing Gentile Church* has not “continued in God’s goodness, and therefore shall be cut off.” (Rom. xi. 22.)†

Since then in this Dispensation, unrighteousness increases and does not diminish (Matt. xxiv. 12), it is *not*

* However the forgoing observations may appear to apply to those who are engaged in the Ministry of the Church of England, they will be found on consideration equally to affect the Lay Members. For example, in the Lord’s SUPPER, the ordinance that Christ has appointed for the solemn recognition of Christian Brotherhood, they are often obliged to receive as Brethren those whom they know to be living without God in the world.

† If any reader should feel interested on this subject, I would beg him to refer to the following texts, which clearly show

the time when the earth shall be full of "the Knowledge of the Lord;" and consequently not the time of the triumph and rest of the true Church of Christ. To decide clearly on this subject is most important, in practically judging on things around us. He who does not perceive the approaching darkness, may rest in the hope that the increase of light will dispel the error of men's minds, and effect that which individual or collective testimony fails to accomplish: but he who has been taught to understand the warnings respecting the Apostasy of the latter day, will not rest until he has benefited by the light which he at present has, and separated himself from all the evil it may have revealed to his view. "That servant which knew his Master's will, and did it *not*, shall be beaten with many stripes." Let us take heed, lest our connection with any system in which the world predominates, should place us in circumstances of being overcharged with its cares, and so *that day* should come upon us *unawares*.

And now I commend what I have written to the blessing of God, and the consciences of my Brethren; and if they will (as Brethren ought) kindly point out any thing contrary to the *law and the testimony*—I trust to have grace given to me to acknowledge and retract my error.

that the period when the "Knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea," is *preceded* by judgment on the Gentiles. (Zeph. iii. 8, 9—Jude—Joel iii. 9, &c.—Rev. xiv. 19.)

The Administrator of this Judgment is uniformly represented to be the Son of Man. (Zech. xiv.—Is. lxiii.—Is. xi. 4, compared with quotation, 2 Thess. ii. 8—Rev. xix. 15.)

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