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A DEFENCE OF THE TRUTH:

CALLED FOR BY

NEATBY'S

"HISTORY OF THE PLYMOUTH BRETHREN."

BY

W. M. SIBTHORPE,

Author of "The Ways of God with Man."

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

I. Cor. xvi. 13.

SECOND EDITION.

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THE WAYS OF GOD
WITH MAN:

AS REVEALED IN THE SCRIPTURES,
FROM
CREATION TO THE END OF TIME.

BY
W. M. SIBTHORPE.

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Synopsis of the above will be found at the
End of this Book.

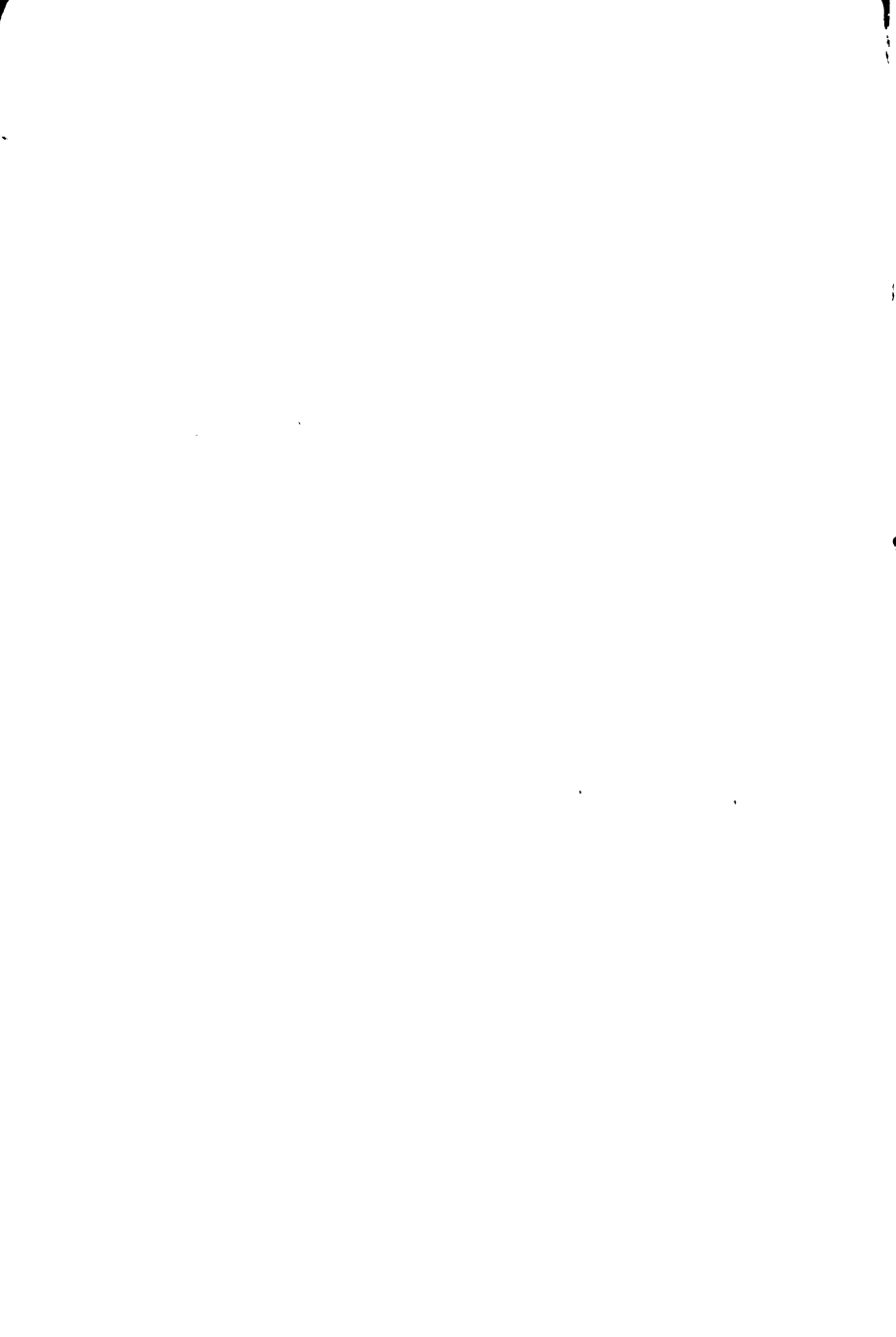
PREFATORY NOTE
TO THE SECOND EDITION.

I N issuing the present Edition the writer desires to say that the words "in fellowship with Mr. Finch," which appeared in the First Edition of this pamphlet, at the end of the fourth paragraph on page 38, have been omitted. He regrets that, through a misapprehension, they were introduced.

The words, "known as 'with Mr. Kelly,'" are also omitted from the fourth paragraph on page 40, and in their place the words "on independent ground" have been inserted; because readers of the pamphlet seemed to construe the former words as throwing the responsibility of establishing independent Meetings on him, rather than upon the Meetings themselves.

W. M. S.

October, 1903.



PREFACE.

NO apology need be made by any one who seeks, however feebly, to defend the truths and principles of Christianity. It is due to Christ from His redeemed ones, that each believer should contend earnestly "for the faith once delivered unto the saints."

The writer regrets the delay in the publication of this Defence; but it could not well be avoided.

On the one hand he waited in the hope that some servant of the Lord more able than himself would give a decisive answer to Mr. Neatby's attack upon the truth. This, he believes, has not yet been done; for although brethren in the Lord have made remarks upon it, there has come before the notice of the writer only one small pamphlet, for the appearance of which he felt thankful. Yet its author was evidently unable to go into the causes of the divisions amongst Brethren, and therefore presented no positive path for the faithful in these closing days of the Church's history on the earth.

On the other hand, the writer of the following pages, being a man of business, much occupied with the affairs of every-day life, had little spare time for the accomplishment of such a task himself. For this reason, too, he would have been thankful if it had been undertaken by another with more ability.

But encouraged by the fact that God takes the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty, and base things, and things that are despised, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence, he cast himself wholly

upon the Lord, that He might be pleased to enable him to raise a voice, decided, if feeble, in defence of those truths which God has made dear, not only to the heart of the writer, but to the hearts of very many of his beloved fellow-believers.

Being fully aware that this Defence has its defects, the writer would ask the reader to bear with him in all Christian patience, and carefully weigh over before God the principles to which prominence has been sought to be given in these pages.

If the reader, out of curiosity, looks for the writer's opinion respecting certain Brethren of note, he will be disappointed, because personalities have as far as possible been avoided.

The whole question that has been raised by Mr. Neatby's book is briefly this: Did God in the Nineteenth Century raise up a testimony as to the truth of what the Church is, according to His own mind and Word?

The answer of the writer will be found in the Defence. But he takes the opportunity of noticing here certain things in Mr. Neatby's book which should not occupy the attention of the reader when, further on, things of far greater importance are before his mind.

In the first place Mr. Neatby infers that Brethren's Meetings "took shape in part under the influence of a delusion, and that that delusion left its traces, more or less deeply, on most of the distinctive features of the system" (page 339.)

The supposed "delusion" has reference to the revived hope of the Church, "the second coming of Christ." Now as a matter of fact Brethren's Meetings were not formed upon the doctrine of the Second Advent at all; but upon the *fact that all Christians are members of one body.*

The remarks Mr. Neatby makes in reference to Christians waiting for their Lord's return are very unhappy; and if from the preface of his second edition we must not infer that in them is couched the scoffer's sneer of the last days, "Where is the promise of His coming?" he certainly seems to say in his heart, "My Lord delayeth His coming," while he has not used the Lord's servants very mercifully!

Another matter is the value he places on "classical education," "theological knowledge and acumen," "systematic divinity," etc., etc., in contrast with an "intimate knowledge of the Bible itself as a living Book."

It seems that whereas the former is everything to him, the latter he counts of little worth. He makes no distinction between the wisdom of this world, that comes to nought, and the perfect wisdom of God that a Christian has through subjection to Christ.

Has Mr. Neatby not learnt in his own soul the reality of this scripture, "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise that they are vain" ? (1 Cor. iii. 18-21).

Does Mr. Neatby not know that it was that very class of men who were versed in the "higher studies connected with theology," and who prided themselves on their "theological learning," that condemned our Lord Jesus Christ to death when He confessed He was the Christ, the Son of the Blessed ?

Is not man's learning to-day leading him to reject "the Bible as a living Book" ?

It is well for the Christian to remember that it is not "a classical education" that gives the knowledge of God, but a lowly submission to His authority according to the revelation He has made of Himself in Christ and in the Holy Scriptures.

One reviewer of Mr. Neatby's book says, "Mr. Neatby has made the religious world his debtor," that is, by the attack he has made upon God's principles of unity. This, if true, manifests that the religious world does not appreciate them. Mr. Neatby, too, speaking of the Meetings of Brethren, says, "Even to this day [it is] a force to be reckoned with among the churches!" (page 279.) He thus plainly shows that "the churches" must be in opposition to Christians being simply gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, owning the all-sufficiency of the Holy Spirit.

Mr. Neatby also says that he "would be thankful if this [his] work should in some measure serve as a humble obstruction" to Mr. Darby's life's work. If the writer of this Defence needed anything to convince him that the truths and principles Mr. Darby taught and maintained were of God, Mr. Neatby's book would exactly serve the purpose.

But Mr. Neatby is not the first man who has tried to obstruct the progress of God's grace in this world. Many years ago the Lord Jesus, speaking from heaven, said to one such, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." We should be thankful if Mr. Neatby were brought down to the feet of the Lord as that man was.

Although Brethren have failed in their testimony, the present state and opposition of "the churches" against the truths of Christianity make it increasingly difficult for Christians to identify themselves with them.

It is very painful for a true Christian—one who loves the Lord Jesus, and desires to be true to Him,—to go to church or chapel and there hear the divinity of his Lord called in question; or to hear the Bible so criticised that one portion after another is held up to ridicule, and then rejected; or to hear a sermon on some political subject or passing event of the day. Yet these are the only things to be met with in many so-called places of worship, and this is what Christians in our days are called upon to support.

It might be well to say, if the writer may speak for Brethren generally, they have not taken up with Christianity as a fable, pastime, plaything, profession, or for a living; nor do they look upon it as one of the "religions" of the world, but as the only religion that is of God; and they still believe that the Name of Christ is the only "name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts iv. 12).

Brethren are simple Christians, who for the most part work with their own hands and earn their own living. When they have any time to spare from their necessary occupations, they seek to edify each other collectively, or seek the salvation of the lost. To their great sorrow they find, in going about from place to place seeking souls, that "the higher criticism" movement has had an appalling

effect upon men generally. The Word of God is fast losing its hold upon the natural conscience through this movement. When persons are spoken to about their souls by the way, a question is immediately raised as to the truth of the Scriptures! Undoubtedly a state of perfect indifference to religion and eternal salvation is fast setting in.

If those who are responsible for this condition of things do not see it, let me give here part of an extract from the pen of a man of the world, copied from "Church Notes" in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, by which they may know, that if they are blind, others are not.

"My contention is this—that the people of England are, except a few enthusiasts on either side, indifferent to religion—Roman religion, Church religion, the religion of Dissent; that the danger of indifference is so great that we have not time to strain at gnats. . . . I agree that there is a great political danger, but I believe it to be indifference, not Papistry."

Popery and indifference to the claims of God go together; and Protestants are fast becoming a mighty power to further both.

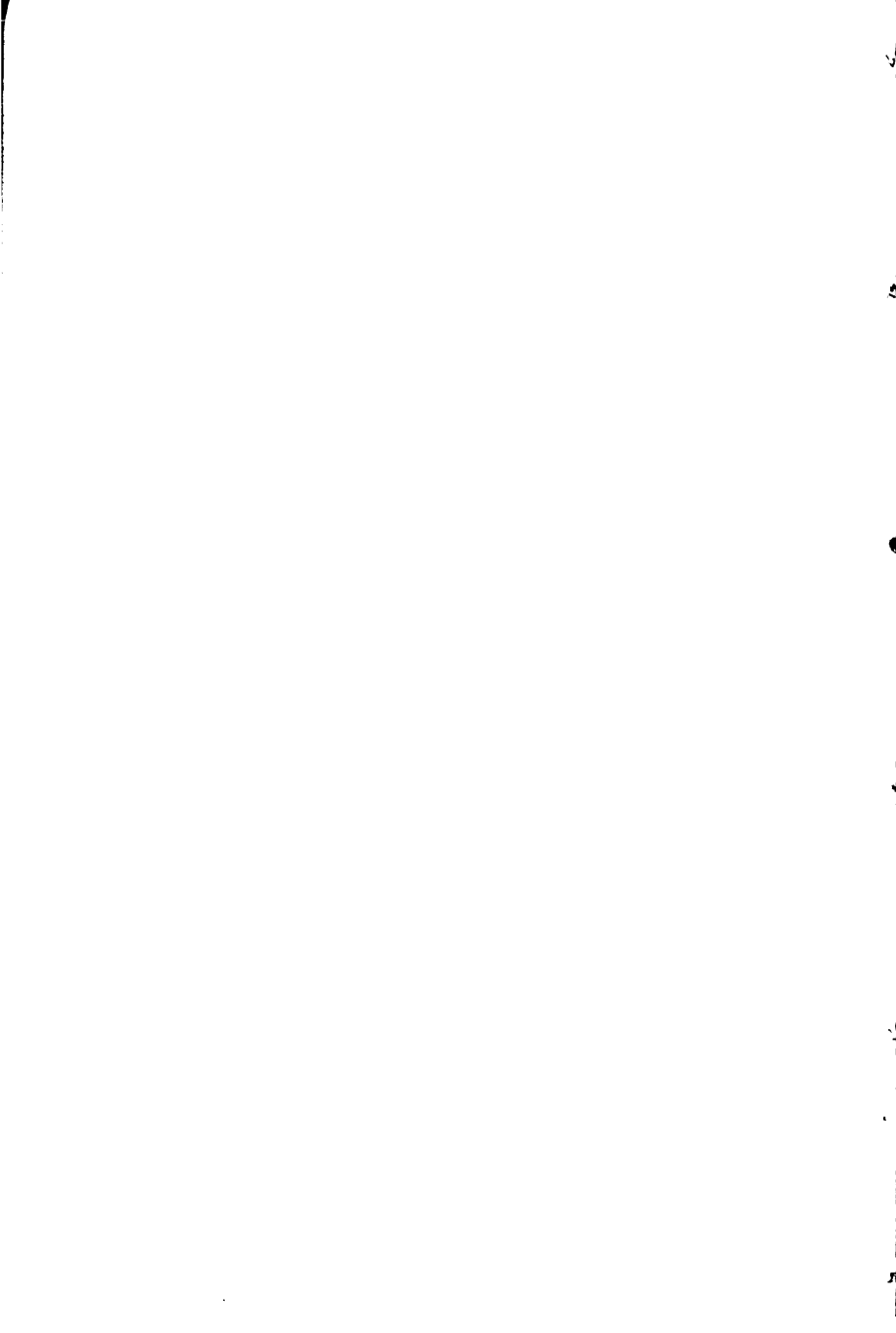
It is well for the Christian to remember that a universal departing from the faith, and a giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, will characterize the closing days of the present period of grace; also there will be a falling away first before the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition: and that God will send a strong delusion, that men should believe a lie, "because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." (2. Thess. ii.)

The only object the writer has in sending forth this Defence, is to encourage the Christian reader to be true to Christ, and hold fast until He comes: and if the Lord is pleased to use it to this end the writer will be amply repaid.

May God in His infinite love and grace keep the feet of His saints in these last days.

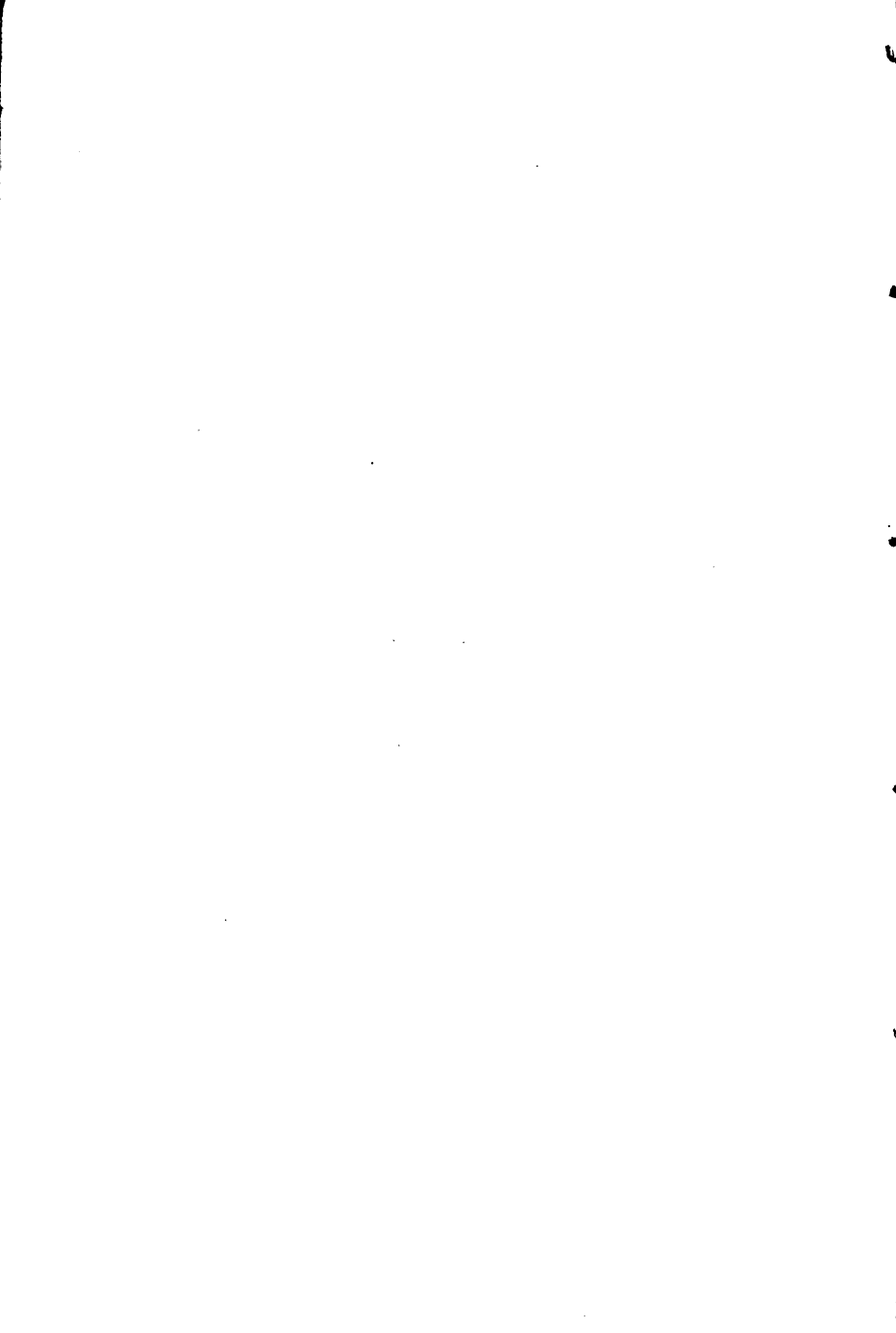
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A DEFENCE OF THE TRUTH

CALLED FOR BY

Neatby's "History of the Plymouth Brethren."

INTRODUCTION.

THE sorrowful work entitled, "A History of the Plymouth Brethren," which has been placed before the world by Mr. W. Blair Neatby, M.A., renders it necessary to make more generally known the positive truth of God that his book seeks to set aside.

Had he, while giving a true account of the failures of the Christians he writes about (although "love covers a multitude of sins"), sought also to present what would be for the profit and edification of God's children, his book might have been both interesting and desirable reading. As it is, however, the heart sickens at the thought of a man who calls himself a Christian publishing to the world the failures of his brethren, many of whom have now entered into their rest.

The purpose of these pages is not to try to justify the Christians known as "Brethren," nor to contradict the charges Mr. Neatby brings against them, be they true or false, but to bring before the reader the truth of God, in order to encourage the individual Christian, wherever he may be found, to hold fast till the Lord comes.

The distinctive truth held and sought to be maintained by Brethren is in connection with the unity of the Church of God as presented to us in the Scriptures.

No one can deny that there is now on all hands a cry for unity in the professing Church; which simply proves

that the Church is not *manifestly* a united community. Who, indeed, would dare to say it is such in the face of the numerous sects and divisions of Christendom?

How to remedy this deplorable condition of things is the great question which occupies the minds of Christendom's theologians and teachers, whether on the Continent of Europe or that of America.

The development of civilization, the advancement of science and art, the enlightened state of the world, all go to reproach the Church on account of its divided and sectarian condition. Hence the great question of the day is: On what foundation can a unity be formed of all professing Christians? Who but the Pope, say some, can give the best answer to such a problem? And to the acceptance of his proposal of unity, which he presented a few years ago, Christendom is fast hastening blindfold.

As to this the true Christian has not much to say. He belongs to a unity that has been formed by God Himself, and is maintained by the Holy Ghost. What has he, then, to do with forming a unity? It is a practical denial that a unity exists.

It is not the first time that the Church has felt the lack of unity, nor is it the first time the Pope of Rome has presented his system of unity. When the Church was first established upon the earth it soon lost the reality of its being united in "one body" by the Holy Ghost. Satan was shrewd enough to take advantage of this, and he had his own counterfeit ready, whereby Christians were easily beguiled, notwithstanding the warnings of Scripture.

But the Church had to pay dearly for accepting the enemy's counterfeit, instead of walking in and seeking grace to keep the unity of Spirit in the bond of peace.

The power of the Pope and of the Church of Rome consisted in its unity. The iron rod of him who could bring kings and all nations to his feet was once the terror of Christendom. The ban of the Pope has struck terror into the hearts and homes of thousands of true Christians, and millions of human beings; yet for the sake of an outward unity, and for the advantage it will be to those who will get power thereby, all that is holy, pure and good will be sacrificed, and the Church will once again be found to have

been betrayed into the hands of her bitterest foe. I am bold to say Mr. Neatby's book will further this end.

Beloved Christian reader, let me tell you again before I say more, There is a *unity* already existing to which you and I belong, that all earth and hell cannot touch ; so that we have nothing whatever to do with trying to form a unity of all Christians.

To stigmatize all the precious truths that God in His goodness has made known in the Word, and which He brought again to light during the last century, as "Brethrenism," "Plymouthism," and "Darbyism," proves beyond doubt that the writer of "A History of the Plymouth Brethren" does not himself appreciate those truths. Yet there are to-day many thousands of Christians who have appreciated, and I trust still do appreciate them, notwithstanding all the opposition of Satan, and the reproach and shame that is brought upon those who desire in any little way in these last days to be found answering to the thoughts of God as expressed in His written Word.

CHAPTER I.

THE REAL QUESTION AT ISSUE.

THE question for us all is (and I am writing for those who take the place of being Christians): Did God speak to the Church in any special way during the Nineteenth Century? Or has He, amidst the wonderful advancement of all secular knowledge, allowed the Church to sink into greater ignorance and darkness than in past ages?

In answer to this question, I say emphatically, God *has* spoken in a very special way ; and that He has done so by engaging the minds and hearts of individual Christians with what is plainly written in His Word.

For this purpose He raised up faithful men, not men of obscure birth and scanty education, but scholarly men of good position and repute, who by His grace renounced all that this world esteems, and took a lowly place as followers of the despised and rejected Son of God, turning to God and the Word of His grace, taking their stand upon what they found written therein, and allowing it to shape their future course. That is why the "garnered experience of eighteen centuries" that were past appealed so little to them, of whom Mr. Neatby complains.

It is a blessed thing for the heart to know that all is in God's hands, and that He does not leave Himself without witness. In all ages He has raised up and qualified faithful men to testify for Him and for His truth in this world; often taking the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty, or when it pleased Him, He would take the mighty, bringing them down at His feet as little children, to send them forth to accomplish His will.

Several mighty and noble ones were found in the ranks of true Christian discipleship at the commencement of the last century, when God was about to bring to light the precious truths which had long been lost sight of by the Church.

All were feeling with much sorrow, and were lamenting, the disunited and sectarian state of the Church, and the little power the truths of Christianity had in souls. Thus God was preparing hearts for the reception of His word and truth, while on the other hand He was qualifying faithful men to be His witnesses of those truths with which the Church is now so well acquainted.

That of these faithful men John Nelson Darby stands first is admitted by not a few; but it is outside the object of this Defence to bring Mr. Darby prominently before the reader. What is intended is to call attention to the truths which God was pleased in a very manifest way to bring to light through him.

It is the knowledge of the truth of God that frees the heart of man; "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." It is the Son of God who gives this freedom: "If the Son therefore shall make you free, *ye shall*

be free indeed" (John viii.). But the free man becomes Christ's slave, His willing servant, to do his Master's will, and withal happy to do it. Thus it was with Saul of Tarsus. When the voice came to him from heaven, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" he answered, "Who art thou, Lord?" "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest!" said the voice. "What wilt Thou have me to do?" was Saul's answer. He placed himself entirely in the Lord's hands to do whatever He would have him do, thus he was able to go on independently of man, knowing he was doing God's will, for the Lord further said, "Rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me." "Whereupon," he says, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (Acts xxvi.).

Thus the Apostle Paul received his apostleship and commission direct from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and he would not allow that *man* had anything whatever to do with it. He therefore writes, "Paul, an Apostle, *not of men, neither by man*, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead." Also, "Immediately I conferred *not with flesh and blood*" (Gal. i. 16). Then again, The Holy Ghost said, "Separate ME Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto *I have called them*" (Acts xiii.).

During the past eighteen centuries Christians had not only lost sight of their oneness in Christ, but also failed to see from whom commission and qualification for His service came; for all had sunk to mere human form and appointment. Thus men of high spiritual qualities were ordained and received their commission oftentimes from the unconverted; or the unconverted received commission, and were ordained ministers in the professing Church!

In the earlier part of the Nineteenth Century these things were looked at by a number of Christians, and

compared with the Word of God, and finding no scriptural authority for the system of things that had grown up around them, they simply sought without pretension a common ground upon which they could be gathered together according to true Christian principles.

It was this that led these Christians, afterwards known as Brethren, to meet in the simple way they have done from that day to this. They separated themselves from the systems around them, and took the simple ground given in Matt. xviii. 20, as gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and found Him to be in their midst according to His own faithful word, "Where two or three are gathered together in MY name, *there am I* in the midst of them."

But there was a great difference amongst them as to the measure of their apprehension of the truth. While all felt the disunited and sectarian state of the Church, all did not see the positive side of the truth. Some said, in principle, Christians all *ought* to be one; and they worked from that standpoint. Others said, "Christians *are* all one in Christ," and this was *their* standpoint. This made all the difference as to the sphere of their labour and success of their ministry.

I am indebted to Mr. Neatby for the information in the preceding paragraph, his being the only book I have read on this subject.

But before looking at the labours of those three servants of Christ, viz. Mr. Groves, Mr. Müller, and Mr. Darby, whom Mr. Neatby brings prominently before us in his book, it will be well to examine the principles upon which the Meetings (or Assemblies) of Brethren were established.

In searching into the Word of God these Christians gained a clearer knowledge of the nature and value of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ; of the counsels and purposes of God; of the character of the different dispensations; and of the nature and unity of the Church of God.

Meetings (or Assemblies) were formed on the fact that all true believers *are* members of one body—the body of Christ, that each and every one who has received the Holy Ghost has been baptized into "one body"; for Scripture

plainly states that "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. xii. 13); and as such, Christians came together to break bread and remember the Lord Jesus in His own appointed way. All may not have understood these principles at first, but intelligence or apprehension of the truth was not the ground of their gathering together. Had it been so they would have simply formed another sect; but when any were received into communion with them, they were received as already members of the body of Christ, and as members of one another. Their being received at the Lord's Table did not make them members of the "one body." They were members before they were received, and were received as such.

Now, any one acquainted with Church history knows that this was a new ground for Christians to be gathered upon. It was not new to Scripture, for Scripture acknowledges no other; but new as a fact in the history of the Church for many hundred years.

Churches of various kinds had been formed, whether the National Church or the various Dissenting bodies, besides the Church of Rome; and to become members of any of these churches the candidate must be enrolled according to the constitution of the particular church.

✚ All this is unknown to Scripture, and when Christians turned to the Word of God to read it independently of man's interpretation, they found that the Spirit of God was doing a work Himself upon earth independent of man altogether: it was He who was forming the Church of God, which is the body of Christ, uniting it to its true Head in heaven, as well as uniting all the members together into "one body." "So we being many *are* one body in Christ, and *every one* members one of another" (Rom. xii. 5).

✚ The position taken by these Christians about the year 1830 was without any pretension whatever. They did not pretend to be the Church of God, but simply sought to walk according to the principles of the Church as found in the Scriptures; and the ground taken was broad enough to embrace all Christians.

CHAPTER II.

"GROVES IN THE EAST."

A FEW Meetings of this character having been established in England and Ireland, a missionary spirit became manifest amongst Brethren, and this brings me to Mr. Neatby's account of "Groves in the East."

Gathering up what we have there of Mr. Groves personally, we cannot but admire his Christian devotedness, and his self-sacrifice as to all that is of this world. But the truths that seem to have governed his heart, and characterized him in his service, were of an individual character. Although he appreciated Christian fellowship, he does not appear to have sought it upon the true principles of Christian unity as found in the Scriptures. Hence his sphere of service in his mission abroad was more or less connected with previously existing Christian systems or societies. This no doubt would account for the non-success of his ministry. He tried to introduce new principles into old systems, and consequently brought himself into conflict with Christians with whom he only desired to walk in happy fellowship. It was like putting new wine into old bottles. "No man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine *must* be put into new bottles; and both are preserved" (Luke v. 37, 38).

These remarks are fully justified by Mr. Neatby himself, who is a great admirer of Mr. Groves. He says, "Norris Groves is one of the Church's great saints; but a solid judgment was not his forte. He had a strong case

against many an existing arrangement, but his opponents might be excused for thinking that the almost total abrogation of arrangement would not mend matters" (page 73).

This explains what I have said as to the different degrees of apprehension of the truth. Mr. Groves does not seem to have presented any positive truth that would lead Christians to manifest by their walking together in love that they were actually united "in one body." His standpoint was on the lines that Christians "all *ought* to be one," and he tried to introduce this thought into systems which, in their nature and constitution, opposed it. Thus he writes, "I was told I was the greatest enemy the Church of England ever had in India, because no one could help loving my spirit, and thus the evil sank tenfold deeper; but indeed I do not wish to injure, but to help her, by taking from her all her false confidences."

The hopelessness of such a task Mr. Groves had to prove bitterly; and he was obliged to leave the Church of England where he found it, without at all mending matters.

The National Church in days gone by has been a stronghold and bulwark against the inroads of Popery in England, but alas! what is it to-day?

Had dear Mr. Groves acted in faith on the simple statements of Scripture, he would have separated himself from a "church" that had "false confidences," and found a happier, if humbler path in seeking to "follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Tim. ii.).

CHAPTER III.

"MÜLLER AT STUTTGART."

WE come now to Mr. Neatby's account of "Müller at Stuttgart."

It appears by Mr. Neatby's narrative that Mr. Müller acted much upon the same principles as Mr. Groves, and with similar results, finding himself at variance with the Christians he thought to *make* one.

It was with a "Baptist Church" that Mr. Müller brought himself into conflict. He sought to introduce principles into it that were altogether contrary to its constitution. The result was a division in the Baptist Church, which was the farthest from Mr. Müller's wish, although he himself was the cause of it: for he writes, "I then entreated the brethren not to think of a separation. I represented to them what a scandal it would be to the ungodly, and what a stumbling-block also to the believers who are yet in the State Church" (page 97).

Mr. Müller might have found afterwards a just cause why he could not walk in fellowship with the Baptist Church, and that it was an old bottle that could not hold new wine.

Mr. Müller, speaking of the division says, "The matter would be, however, more painful, did I not see it of great importance that the disciples who hold the truth should be separate from those who hold such fearful errors as: the forgiveness of sins received through baptism; baptism a covenant between us and God; regeneration through baptism, and no regeneration without it; the *actual death* of the old man through baptism, it being drowned, so that only the body and the new nature are alive" (page 97).

If Mr. Müller knew that these "fearful errors" were held by this church he ought to have separated himself from it, as a true servant of the Lord in obedience to His Word, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." (2 Tim. ii.). Then no doubt his service would have been more successful, and he would not have found himself in the "difficulties" that Mr. Neatby says so "speedily arose."

But Mr. Müller is to be honoured as a man of faith, in connection with the work he undertook for the orphans, which is outside the object of this Defence to notice further; but we fail to find in his writings a clear apprehension of the unity and nature of the Church of God. This we shall see was made very manifest when it became necessary for Brethren to act in faithfulness to the Lord in connection with the principles upon which the Church has been gathered by the Holy Ghost.

CHAPTER IV.

"DARBY IN VAUD."

BEFORE looking into the narrative of Mr. Darby's mission in Switzerland, I would say it is evident that Mr. Neatby's object in writing this "History" is to set aside the scriptural truths which Mr. Darby taught, and bring discredit upon all he did and maintained, whether it were right or wrong. But no Christian can ignore with impunity the simple truths of Christianity, whoever may teach them. We may not all have faith enough to deny ourselves, and take up the cross daily and follow Christ, counting all things but loss for Him; yet the Christian is responsible to the Lord to be faithful to Him, and he has to face not only what Mr. Neatby calls "Darbyism," but all the "isms" of Christendom. But while he speaks of what Mr. Darby taught as a "fascination," Mr. Neatby does not bring forward any divine principle from the Word of God, or any truth that would be for the edification of his readers, and a help to Christians in this evil day.

We are therefore shut up to what the Church has already. All must be examined by the Word of God, and whatever we find there will do to walk in, whether Mr. Neatby approves of it or not. We have to remember the exhortation, "Study to shew thyself *approved unto God*, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. ii.).

Referring to the work of Mr. Groves and Mr. Müller, Mr. Neatby says, "Widely different is the spectacle that Darby's work in the Canton de Vaud presents, and of vastly greater consequence in the development of Brethrenism."

Now it is plain that the sphere of Mr. Darby's labours was unlike that of Groves and Müller. He laboured *outside* the existing Christian systems. He did not try to introduce what he knew to be the truth into systems which in their nature opposed it. He, in an unpretentious way, laboured amongst individual Christians whom he came in contact with; but the power of the Word of God soon penetrated into their hearts, and the fruit of his labours was soon manifested by those who received the Word of God acting upon it. So true is this that even Mr. Neatby is obliged to acknowledge that "Darby's success in his primary mission was rapid and complete"! (page 80). Nor does he withhold from Mr. Darby the praise that any worldly man would give to another who is successful in an enterprise. If, however, Mr. Darby's success had ended in his hearers saying, "What a beautiful sermon"! or, "What a wonderful man"! Mr. Neatby would have had no "History" to write that was "without precedent."

It is the actual opposition to the truth of God manifested by Mr. Neatby, that makes it necessary to bring before the reader what Mr. Darby taught. But I must not be misunderstood. I do not mean that Mr. Neatby opposes the truth of individual salvation through the blood of Christ. This I suppose is what he calls "Evangelism," of which he certainly approves. But he is opposed to truths in connection with the Church of God, those that relate to the collective position and responsibility of Christians one towards another and to Christ the Head of the Church.

But in the beginning of the last century, even the truth of the salvation of the soul through the blood of Christ was clouded in the minds of Christians, to say nothing of other truths. Accordingly Mr. Andrew Miller* writes respecting the first meetings of Brethren: "Many, on their first visit, felt the place to be very strange, having been accustomed to all the propriety of churches and chapels. But the truths they heard were new in those days; such as, the efficacy of redemption, the knowledge of pardon and acceptance, the oneness of the body of Christ, the presence

*Mr. Neatby's grandfather.

of the Holy Ghost in the Assembly, and the Lord's second coming."

It was the presentation of these truths that met the deep need felt in many souls; and what made the work so effective was that they were presented in the plain language of Scripture. Any one therefore turning to the Word of God found what was taught there. Thus hearts were satisfied, and sinners saved; they found peace with God, having redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins. They learned also that the Lord Jesus was coming again, and they waited therefore for His return.

This was not all, for the entrance of God's Word giveth light and understanding unto the simple. Christians rapidly became enlightened as to the true nature and unity of the Church of God, consequently there was a revolution as to how Christians met together. The Word of God alone was the authority for the ground taken by them. Hence the "gathered experience of eighteen Christian centuries" was as nothing to them, in so far as that experience was not in accord with the principles of the Church of God as found in the Scriptures.

Speaking of this Mr. Neatby says, "Great as the revolution was, it seems to have been almost silently effected" (page 82). And why? Because it was the "still small voice" of God's Word that was doing its own work in the power of the Holy Ghost.

And Mr. Neatby further says, "During the five years that followed Darby's arrival in Lausanne, his principles spread far and wide in French Switzerland, and obtained some successes in Berne and Bâle. In the South of France they spread over a considerable district, of which Montpelier was the most important town, though Ardèche is said to have been the scene of the greatest success in those days" (page 84).

But Mr. Neatby is quite mistaken when he says the man who ventured on so great an enterprise was "single-handed." For before Mr. Darby started on his important mission the Lord said to him, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end." This was quite enough for this true

servant of Christ, which will be seen by the following hymn he composed not long after he started out :—

“ Rise, my soul ! Thy God directs thee ;
 Stranger hands no more impede ;
 Pass thou on ; His hand protects thee—
 Strength that has the captive freed.

Is the wilderness before thee,
 Desert lands, where drought abides ?
 Heavenly springs shall there restore thee,
 Fresh from God's exhaustless tides.

Light divine surrounds thy going ;
 God Himself shall mark thy way ;
 Secret blessings, richly flowing,
 Lead to everlasting day.

God, thine everlasting portion,
 Feeds thee with the mighty's meat ;
 Price of Egypt's hard extortion,
 Egypt's food no more to eat.

Art thou weaned from Egypt's pleasures ?
 God in secret thee shall keep ;
 There unfold His hidden treasures,
 There His love's exhaustless deep.

In the desert God will teach thee
 What the God that thou hast found ;
 Patient, gracious, powerful, holy—
 All His grace shall there abound !

On to Canaan's rest still wending,
 E'en thy wants and woes shall bring
 Suited grace from high descending—
 Thou shalt taste of mercy's spring.

Though thy way be long and dreary,
 Eagle strength He'll still renew ;
 Garments fresh and foot unwearied,
 Tell how God hath brought thee through !

When to Canaan's long-loved dwelling,
 Love divine thy foot shall bring,
 There with shouts of triumph swelling,
 Zion's songs in rest to sing.

There no stranger-God shall meet thee !
 Stranger thou in courts above ;
 He who to His rest shall greet thee,
 Greet's thee with a well-known love."

This hymn was first published in "The Christian Hymn Book," third edition, 1837.

Mr. Darby had, therefore, no need to combine with any one, or form a confederacy or society for the promulgation of his principles. At the same time he was very thankful for the fellowship and prayers of his fellow-Christians ; and valued the work and labour of other servants of God, ever appreciating any service done to Christ, even if for conscience' sake he could not associate himself with them.

Still, my object is not to hold up and speak in undue praise of Mr. Darby. He will get his own reward for his own labour. But I ask the reader to bear with me in the foregoing, as I must confess for myself, I "esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake," notwithstanding that I never knew him personally.

The real point at issue is truth, not persons. What should interest us, and we should inquire into, is, What were and are the truths and principles that made such a stir, not only in this country but in other countries also, sixty years ago? Were they of God or man?

No one denies that God has been saving souls through the blood of Christ all through the dark ages of the Church's history ; but he who denies that the Church itself has failed in its responsibility as a light-bearer for God denies the most plainly demonstrated fact in this world.

It is a matter of revelation that the Lord Jesus Christ died that He might gather together *in one* the children of God that were scattered abroad (John xi. 52) ; and He Himself prayed, "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.). I ask, then, Is this oneness manifested? and does the world believe? No! the world does not believe, and Christians themselves are opposed to this oneness.

The Church has failed to answer to the thoughts and desires of Christ, the Head of the Church. This was clearly seen by Mr. Darby and many thousands of Christians at that time. It was also seen that Christians *are all one in Christ*, whether they manifest it or not.

But would it be right for Christians, who saw the ruin and corruption of the church in its manifestation upon the earth, to continue in the corruption? Has God made no provision in His Word for those who desire to walk in the truth in days like these?

God has indeed given instructions in His Word as to how Christians ought to behave themselves "in the house of God, which is the Church [Assembly] of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. iii. 15.) But suppose the Church fails, and loses its character, and becomes like the church at Laodicea (Rev. iii.) which, while boasting it was rich and increased with goods, was actually "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." And suppose there are in it those that deny the truth, so that the faith of some is overthrown; suppose infidels and rationalists take the place of ministers in the Church of God, false teachers that deny the Lord that bought them; what then? Then, "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His." It is then that the Apostle compares the Church to a "great house," saying, "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth, and some to honour and some to dishonour." Then God says to the true child of God, "Let him that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity"; and, "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work. Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Tim. ii.) For "what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an

infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. vi. 15-18).

I do not say that these scriptures were definitely before Brethren when they formed their first Meetings. They truly carried them out in principle; but acted in faith upon more positive truth connected with the Church of God, such as the unity of the body of Christ, the fact that all true Christians are members of one body, as the Word of God plainly teaches, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is [the] Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." "So we being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (1 Cor. xii.; Rom. xii. 5).

✦ I have already said that Christians in England and Ireland came together according to this unity; and it was this truth Mr. Darby taught in Switzerland and other parts of the world. This resulted in Christians being simply gathered together in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, as members of His body and of one another; all being united to Christ, the Head of the body in heaven; and also to one another, by the Holy Ghost. So the oft-repeated question, "What or whose church shall I join"? was at once settled, for the answer was, "No church at all"! because you are already (if a true Christian) joined to the Lord, and he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. You have only to identify yourself with, and be received as a member of the body of Christ by those who are already walking in this truth in the place in which you are living (if there are any), and you will be received all over the world by the Christians who are walking in the unity of the Spirit.



Meetings formed upon these principles of true Christian unity sprang up everywhere. These Meetings were necessarily composed of Christians from both the State Church and Dissent; for many children of God in those days were satisfied with neither the one nor the other, so that when it was pointed out by one and another, who had attended a simple Bible reading, perhaps in a private house, that all Christians *are one in Christ*, and that they should therefore walk together as such, many a difficulty vanished from the minds of perplexed Christians, and they soon found the blessedness of true Christian fellowship.

But this ere long brought a flood of opposition upon the man who dared to introduce these true Christian principles into existing systems of men. For although Mr. Darby laboured outside their systems, the truths he taught soon penetrated into them; and were carried far and wide by others just calling attention to what was so plainly stated in the Word of God.

This led to much controversy on the subject of the Church, which only resulted in a better understanding of the true scriptural teaching on the subject.

Mr. Neatby seems to have but little understanding as to the purpose of God respecting His Church, both as a witness for Him upon the earth, and as to its future glory in heaven. In his remarks on the controversy between Messrs. Rochat and Olivier, and Mr. Darby, he displays pitiable ignorance.

Every simple Christian who has any right knowledge of the ways of God, knows that the Church was set up upon the earth as a witness for God, to testify to the world of what Christ is, and that it is responsible to God as such. But who would dare to say the Church has not fallen, and has not become a corrupt system?

Simple Christians know, too, that while the Church has failed to answer to God's thoughts upon earth, and to manifest to the world its oneness in Christ, God will accomplish and display this in glory according to His own power and grace; but He will destroy those who have defiled His Temple (John xvii. 22-24; 1 Cor. iii. 17).

In the controversy referred to, Mr. Darby wrote the following to explain what he meant by the Church, which will also serve to show what a clear understanding he had of the mind and thoughts of God on the subject:—

“I will explain myself as to what I mean by the Church. The Church is a body subsisting in unity here below, formed by the power of God by the gathering together of His children in union with Christ, who is its Head; a body which derives its existence and its unity from the work and the presence of the Holy Spirit come down from heaven, consequent on the ascension of Jesus the Son of God, and His sitting at the right hand of the Father, after having accomplished redemption.

“This Church, united by the Spirit, as the body to the Head, to this Jesus seated at the Father’s right hand, will, no doubt, be manifested in its totality, when Christ shall be manifested in His glory; but, meanwhile, as being formed by the presence of the Holy Ghost *come down from heaven*, it is essentially looked at, in the Word of God, as subsisting in its unity on the earth. It is the habitation of God by the Spirit, essentially heavenly in its relationships, but having an earthly pilgrimage, as to the scene in which it is actually found and in which it ought to manifest the nature of the glory of Christ, as His epistle of commendation to the world, for it represents Him and is in His place. It is the bride of the Lamb, in its privileges and calling. It is presented as a chaste virgin to Christ for the day of the marriage of the Lamb. Evidently this last thought will have its accomplishment in resurrection; but what characterizes the Church as being quickened according to the power which has raised Christ from among the dead and set Him at the right hand of God, is the realization and manifestation of the glory of its Head by the power of the Holy Ghost, before Jesus its Head is revealed in person” (Col. Writ. Vol. iv. 48-49).

Now, while no one would dare to say this is what the Church manifests to the world to-day, yet surely it is right for Christians to seek to walk according to the true principles of Christianity.

This is what the Christians known as Brethren first sought to do three-quarters of a century ago. But they

found, as has been before stated, that this simple ground of Christian unity and fellowship could not be taken without attacks from Satan. In every age when God has intervened for the blessing of His people in particular, Satan has sought to mar His work, and bring those whom God has delivered from his power into bondage by falsifying the testimony God raised up to His nature of goodness and love.

The liberty and freedom Brethren enjoyed as simple believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, as children of the Father, and as members of the body of Christ and of one another, was indeed an experience that plainly manifested the power of the Spirit, as well as affording a contrast to all the strife and contention that had raged in the professing Church since the days of the Apostles.

In the Word of God great principles are established whereby God's people can be preserved from the effects of the attacks of the enemy. These principles have to be learnt morally in the soul by every Christian if he would be preserved and kept in a path of faith, both individually and collectively.

In fact, every Christian has not only the privilege but is responsible to sit at the feet of the Lord Jesus and hear His Word, and thus become acquainted with His mind and ways, learning of Him who is meek and lowly in heart. He then finds rest for his soul. Taking the Lord's yoke upon him he proves the truth of His own words, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. xi. 28-30). It is in this way God qualifies the Christian to be a witness for Christ while he is here in this world.

It matters not in what sphere of life the Christian may be found; whether high or low, when he has learnt in his soul the infinite place of blessing into which the blood of Christ has brought him before God, as accepted in Christ the beloved Son of the Father, he having his sins forgiven and perfect peace with God, knowing he is made a new creation in Christ—when he has learnt this, he is responsible to walk with God in the sphere in which the love of God and the grace of Christ have found him.

But this is individual, and does not touch his associations with other Christians; although it is obvious that

subjection to Christ in his individual path would qualify him to walk in the unity that has been formed by the Holy Ghost.

Individual subjection of Christians to Christ, sitting at His feet and hearing His Word, would necessarily result in a collective testimony.

The claims of Christ must not be ignored by the individual Christian. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20).

I need not speak of how far short we all come in our individual path of faith and devotedness to the Lord, notwithstanding the infinite claims Christ has upon us.

Nevertheless God did call Christians to more simplicity and devotedness to Christ in the earlier part of the last century, and the power of the Spirit was manifest in their renunciation of that which the natural man so easily sets his heart upon.

It was this that led Christians to seek to walk in the true principles of Christian unity.

We return to our subject. I have already said Brethren were simply gathered together in the Name of the Lord Jesus as members of His body; but I now add that it was primarily for the breaking of bread in remembrance of their Lord and Saviour who had given Himself for them. This they sought to do in accordance with His own desire expressed on the night in which He was betrayed; but recognizing further the special revelation given to the Apostle Paul in connection with the Church. So that this ordinance became the centre of communion and fellowship, not only of the body and blood of Christ, but of one another as members of "one body" according to 1 Cor. x. and xi.

"For," says the Apostle, "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take eat: this is My body, which is broken [given] for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner

also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in My blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death *till He come.*" "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread [or loaf]."

But they also recognized that Christ as Head of His body the Church, had made provision for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of His body.

He having ascended up on high had given gifts unto men, "and He gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which *every joint* supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of *every part*, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. iv.).

It will be seen from these scriptures that the Church, as God first established it upon the earth, was manifestly complete in unity, as a body formed by the Holy Spirit, having gifts qualified and given by Christ Himself the Head, for the work of the ministry and perfecting of the saints; beside that which every joint in the body supplieth, so that the members are needful one to the other, therefore the foot cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee, nor the ear to the eye; for as all the members of the human body are needful, so also are all the members of this spiritual body needful to each other.

Moreover, God Himself is in the Church by the Spirit, and He is there to order the exercise of the gifts according to the mind of Christ, who is ever the object of the Church's affections. So "to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit . . . but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will" (1 Cor. xii.).

And this is what Mr. Neatby has the audacity to call "haphazardism." May God in His mercy forgive the blasphemy.

That man may fail to act according to the Spirit no one denies; and that all may seek their own, and not the things of Jesus Christ, and thus failure and ruin come in where God set up all in perfection at the first. But no excuse can be made for the one who dares to set aside God's order, however Christians may fail to walk therein.

Just as Satan disturbed the peace and blessing of our first parents by introducing elements contrary to God's word, and as he also brought murmuring and discontent into the Church where all had been of one heart and of one mind, so he sought to mar the peace and unity of those Christians who in simplicity had turned again to those principles that were established by God at the beginning for the peace, edification and order of His Church while in this wilderness world.

CHAPTER V.

BRETHREN'S FIRST CONFLICT AND DIVISION.

AT Plymouth, a Meeting had been established according to these divine principles, into the midst of which Mr. B. W. Newton introduced the principles of clericalism—principles that were altogether contrary to the constitution of the Meeting. This necessarily caused trouble; and it was certainly the work of Satan, although he used Mr. Newton as a tool to accomplish it.

Mr. Newton seems to have had a hostile feeling against the position Brethren had taken as gathered to the Lord's Table.

Mr. Neatby says of him, "Newton was measuring with jealous care the progress he might reckon on in pressing doctrines against Darby. He was using an opportunity to discredit the greatest teaching. Lessons taken were circulating manuscript notes of his Bible readings far and wide, and were it was stated, making things very unpleasant for all whose zeal for Newton was less ardent than their own" (page 110).

Mr. Newton himself writing of the ecclesiastical position of Brethren, said, "I feel bound in conscience to oppose in every legitimate way . . . I desire to produce in the minds of our Brethren everywhere the same strong sense that pervades my own, of the evil of this system, and this is one object of my labour everywhere. At the same time, my hostility is against a system, not against individuals."

I ask with all solemnity, if Mr. Newton had such thoughts of the position of Brethren, what honesty was there in associating himself with them?

If an opposition had not been raised when Mr. Newton came out in his true colours, it would have proved that Brethren did not care in the least for the principles they professed to maintain.

Moreover, Mr. Newton had a system of doctrine that was opposed to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and to Christianity! This he introduced amongst Brethren in a very subtle way, not bringing it to light until he thought he had got the "support he might reckon on."

The ground Mr. Neatby takes in connection with Mr. Newton's doctrine is very distressing. First, he nullifies (on page 132) the charge brought against him; then (on page 134) he says the charge was a "true one."

I give the sentences that the reader may see for himself: "Whatever Newton's speculative errors may have been, there is not, I am persuaded, a single paragraph in all his writings that would afford colourable ground for charging him with indifference to the glory of Christ. If Darby had deliberately sat down to devise the most malignant lie that

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could be told against his neighbour, he could scarcely have done worse" (132).

"With whatever exaggerations and misconstructions Darby urged the charge, the charge he was urging was at least a true one" (134).

I leave the Christian reader to judge for himself what a "History" such as this is worth.

Mr. Neatby goes on to say Newton was always very jealous in maintaining, in an extreme Calvinistic sense, the imputation of Adam's guilt to all his posterity; and he had actually brought Christ beneath the imputation as coming by His human birth under "Adam's federal headship."

Here Mr. Neatby shows that Mr. Newton brought our Blessed Saviour and Lord down to the level of sinful man! Yet he would have us believe there was no ground for charging him with indifference to the glory of Christ.

Scripture is plain as to the glory of the Person of Christ. As Man, born into this world, God says of Him, "That holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke i. 35). He is spoken of as "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. vii. 26). And according to the Spirit of holiness, He was raised from the dead (Rom. i. 4).

In the controversy that arose through the introduction of Mr. Newton's clerical principles and false doctrines, this question was raised: Can the Divine principles of unity be maintained at the expense of holiness and truth?

There is but one emphatic answer to this question, viz. "Holiness becometh Thy house, O Lord, for ever" (Ps. xciii. 5).

But this is a principle that is very slowly learnt, yet without holiness no man shall see the Lord (Heb. xii. 14).

The Meeting at Plymouth was fast becoming leavened by the evil of Mr. Newton's doctrine; for although Scripture is plain as to how Christians should act under such circumstances, yet few seemed prepared to walk in simple obedience to the Word of God, which says, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve

A DEFENCE

not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." (Rom. xvi. 17-18).

Now this is just what Mr. Newton's doctrine did; it caused divisions wherever it was made known, and it was positively contrary to anything that Brethren had learnt or held. If ever he had known the truth, he had now departed from it; therefore the individual responsibility of the Christian was to avoid him, or, as the Apostle says to Timothy, "From such turn away."

Had one and all so acted Mr. Newton would have been left to himself, and Brethren would have been preserved from this attack of Satan, and continued undivided. But alas! they did not so act, and many were deceived by Mr. Newton's "good words and fair speeches."

No doubt very few understood God's way of acting under such circumstances, for this was new experience to all, and God had many a lesson to teach them through which, perhaps, could only be learnt by passing them through such a fiery trial. But, thank God! He Himself is always prepared for the enemy, so, while Satan was sowing the tares of discord and contention, God was preparing one of His servants for the crisis, and that was Mr. Darby. Even Mr. Neatby confesses "Darby was not deceived" (page 143).

No, thank God! he was not. He had a clear understanding what to do under such circumstances; and seeing that the constitution of the Meeting at Plymouth was together changed by the support many gave Mr. Newton on the one hand, and on the other by the rest taking a neutral position, Mr. Darby, after testifying to the wrong of this fact, separated himself from them, on his individual responsibility to the Lord according to His will.

This took place on October 26th, 1845. Mr. Neatby's own account of this. "On Sunday, October 26th, at the close of the morning meeting, Darby and the congregation at Ebrington Street Chapel, and I . . . m that he was going to quit the Assembly. He d from entering into details, as he puts it. 'I . . . ed the principles on which I went: that I felt God ctically displaced; and more particularly, that

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there was a *subversion of the principles on which we met**; that there was evil and unrighteousness unconfessed and unjudged' " (page 113).

Mr. Darby, seeing that the Meeting at Plymouth had falsified the divine principles of unity and truth, acted honestly in separating himself from it. This he did for himself. He asked no one to stand by him or follow him, and Brethren might have left him alone. But the scriptures he acted upon were far too plain for them to question his position; and although there was no outward manifestation that the Lord stood by him, as was true when Moses acted in a similar way under like circumstances, in going outside the camp, when Israel had corrupted themselves in the matter of the golden calf, yet Mr. Darby could point to the scripture which was the ground of his action, viz. "Let him that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity," and thus leave himself in the Lord's hands. ✕

If for the moment he stood alone, there was, nevertheless, great power and reality in his action; for, in spite of all the opposition he met with, he would not identify that which was unholy and untrue with the name of Him who is holy and true. Neither would he allow God's principles of unity to be falsified by associating them with evil.

In the matter of Israel and Moses we read, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: they have turned aside quickly out of the way I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf and worshipped it. . . . And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. . . . And Moses took the tabernacle [his tent], and pitched it without the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that every one which sought the Lord went out unto the Tabernacle of the congregation which was outside the camp. . . . And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the Tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the

* Italics are mine.—W. M. S.

Tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses. . . . And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Ex. xxxii.-iii.).

Although it does not appear that Moses had any command to act in this way, yet he met with the Lord's own approval, and He identified Himself with Moses outside the evil in the camp. So God stands by every one who is faithful to Him and His Word in every dispensation. But the servant of the Lord must be satisfied with the Lord's own approval, for his actions are sure to be condemned by those who have not faith so to act.

Now there is a marked difference between division and separation from evil.

"Division" is caused by the introduction of principles or doctrines into an assembly foreign to its constitution. Division was caused at Plymouth by the introduction of clerical principles and false doctrines, before any separation took place.

When an assembly refuses to judge evil, and becomes leavened by it, "separation" from it is God's way for the faithful in order that His own principles of holiness and truth may be maintained, and His saints go on in peace with one heart and one soul.

The utmost confusion must characterize Meetings of Christians when God's principles are not enforced and acted upon, unless such Meetings give up altogether the principles of Christianity.

If the principles of holiness and truth cannot be maintained in a Christian assembly, then those who desire to maintain them must do so *outside* that assembly, whatever its pretensions may be.

God sometimes allows heresies to come in that those who have His own principles to maintain may be made manifest. Paul writes, "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be manifest among you" (1 Cor. xi. 19).

These things necessarily test the hearts of God's people; and God means our hearts to be tested. The Lord says, "All the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works" (Rev. ii. 23).

We cannot look upon all that which was going on at this time amongst Brethren as a strife about nothing, for we can see the Lord's hand in it very plainly.

God had wrought mightily in spreading His truth, and in gathering His own loved ones to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ: but the question was, How far did they really understand what God Himself was doing? He was about to teach them; but the only way we can learn what is of God is by true subjection to Himself. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God" (John vii. 17).

God made the troubles that were at Plymouth a test to every heart; and Meetings were obliged ultimately to declare whether they stood for the true Christ of God or whether they treated the matter with indifference. Very few really justified Mr. Newton in his clericalism or doctrine; it therefore became a question of taking "neutral ground," or of contending earnestly "for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," thus making a bold stand for the truth when it had been assailed.

For some time Mr. Darby stood alone, waiting patiently for God to do His own work, that hearts and consciences might be rightly exercised, and that Brethren might understand what his action of separation meant.

It was not until December 28th that he again broke bread in remembrance of the Lord Jesus, when "fifty or sixty" identified themselves with him. Thus the Lord wrought for His own glory in the preservation of His truth and the maintenance of *His principles of unity*.

Many thought that because a definite stand was made for the truth, by a separation from the evil, the principles of unity were given up, as well as the ground first taken by Brethren. But this was not so, because God's unity cannot be maintained at the expense of truth. Unity at the expense of truth is the unity of the Church of Rome; and no intelligent Christian would dare to say that was God's unity.

From this time there were two distinct characters of Meetings of Brethren; (1) those who acted according to the instructions given in the Word of God, maintaining God's true principles of unity in separation from evil; and (2)

those who took a neutral position, giving up these principles, when it was a question of standing true to Christ and His Word.

Mr. Newton soon after left Brethren altogether, and formed a meeting according to his own ideas. But he had then accomplished his object, and divided Brethren into two companies.

Had Brethren only been faithful to the Lord, and turned away from, and avoided the one who caused offences and divisions amongst them by his doctrine, he would have gone outside earlier, without dividing the saints.

We all have to face these things if we desire to walk in the truth of God, although many of us were not born when all that which was enacted at Plymouth and elsewhere took place.

What we have to do is to learn what God would teach us in all the trials through which He passes His own. Any one of us might fail to stand true to Christ if tested with a fiery trial. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. x. 12).

Beloved Brethren, these are our common sorrows, but let us not reproach one another; let us rather mourn over our divided state. It is a day of reproach and dishonour to our blessed Lord and Master, and we must and do confess we have our share in all this, and have failed to answer to His thoughts.

This "History" that Mr. Neatby has placed before the world concerns every one who professes to be gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; and we must face the reproach and shame that is rightly brought upon us. Are we not verily guilty for not being whole-hearted for Christ? Has He not been again wounded in the house of His friends? Have we not allowed personal interests to come in, instead of maintaining faithfulness to the One to whom we owe everything?

✕ Would not the Lord have had pity on Brethren, and not allowed them to be divided if they had been more faithful to Him? Would He not have removed from their midst the one who troubled them? ✕

But the Lord still loves His own, and although "we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny

Himself." Let us therefore trust Him, and seek to be true to Him according to our measure of faith.

I have said there was a great difference amongst Brethren as to their apprehension of the truth. This surely is always manifest when God allows trials to come in to test our faith. It is only as our souls are formed by the Word of God in the knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that we can detect the nature of the attacks of Satan. Had the work of Christ been attacked, and the way of salvation through His precious blood been called in question, Brethren, as one man, would have stood up and opposed the adversary.

It was God's principles of unity that were assailed; so that the whole ground of Christians gathering together in unity had to be considered. The result was that two distinct positions were taken by Brethren from that time.

We have previously seen that Mr. Darby and about fifty or sixty other Christians with him took a position of separation from evil as maintaining God's principles of unity.

The scriptures they acted upon were as follows:—"Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. ii. 19). "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you" (2 Cor. vi. 17). "Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them" (Rom. xvi. 17). This latter scripture could only be carried out by a complete separation from the Ebrington Street Meeting at Plymouth, because it upheld and sheltered Mr. Newton.

✕ Let it be borne in mind that Brethren, as a whole, were "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," by walking together as members of "one body"; and this is why all the Meetings of Brethren had to look at and consider the principles of the unity of the Church of God. ✕

The trouble at Plymouth was, therefore, the trouble of all, because Brethren walking together, wherever they had Meetings, as members of "one body," alike suffered by this attack of Satan. But they did not all act in the unity of the Spirit.

At Bristol Mr. Newton's doctrines were disowned and condemned, but no stand was taken for the maintenance of the truth. It was there that the principles of "Open Brethren" were first established.

Those Meetings are known as "Open" where Christians come together simply as believers, without any responsibility in a collective way beyond their own Meeting; so that what is done by one Meeting would not be binding on another. In this way they avoid any difficulties that might arise through discipline, and have no questions raised as to doctrine. This is exactly the ground that the Bristol Meeting took, and these are known as "Bethesda principles."

Although Mr. Müller had said, in connection with a division in a Baptist Church at Stuttgart,* "The matter would be, however, more painful did I not see it of great importance that the disciples who hold the truth should be separate from those who hold such fearful errors . . . ;" yet now he refused, with other Brethren at Bristol, to act upon this principle. If it was right for Mr. Müller to separate from those who held error in Germany, why not in England? But this principle of separation from evil the Bristol Meeting gave up; yet it is the first principle laid down in God's Word whereby we can maintain the truth.

The other Meetings of Brethren remained on the original ground. They continued to be gathered together as members of the body of Christ and of one another, to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, seeking grace to keep His Word and not to deny His Name. But from this time their Meetings everywhere took a definite character in maintaining that separation from evil was God's principle of unity, that is, the unity that is of God can only be maintained on the principle of holiness.

Although this necessitated walking in separation from other Christians who were identified with false doctrine or evil practice, yet the unity they sought to walk in embraced every Christian in the spirit of holiness; so that the ground upon which they were gathered embraced all the children of God as members of the body of Christ.

God exercised the various companies very much by these troubles. There had been, no doubt, loose expressions as

* See page 10.

to the Person of Christ that Brethren were not aware of ; but instead " of treating the subject of our Lord's humanity as a matter of speculative or angry controversy," as suggested by " The Letter of the Ten," it led to Brethren humbling themselves, and confessing wherein they had erred.

But one is hardly able to conceive how Mr. Neatby can be so heartless and unfeeling as to call all that which is holy and sacred in the experience of a Christian as " a little amusing." Confessing one's sins, if " a little amusing " to him, was not to the brother who confessed his fault, having to do with a holy God, as well as a God of all grace.

Was it " a little amusing " to Peter, when the Lord looked upon him and he went out and wept bitterly, he having denied his Lord and Master ? Did David think it " a little amusing " when Nathan said, " Thou art the man," and he was convicted of his sin, and made confession, " I have sinned against the Lord " ?

Does Mr. Neatby not know that the Lord loves those He chastens, and that " no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous : nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby " ? (Heb. xii.)

Does he also not know that, if we walk in subjection to God, amidst all our failures and shortcomings we learn what God is as a God of all grace, notwithstanding all that we are, and that this enables us to find our joy in God Himself ?

It is a solemn, deep reality to have to do with God when we have gone astray, although very blessed, too ; for " the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy " (James v. 11).

The Word of God prevailed mightily from this time. Many Brethren, getting disentangled from the false teaching, confessed wherein they had erred, many others freeing themselves from the " neutral " position taken by the Bristol Meeting, found themselves once again walking in happy fellowship with those who had stood for the truth.

God still upheld His faithful servant, and those who acted according to His Word, encouraging them by allowing His truth to spread in a remarkable way, so that the minds

of Christians became rapidly formed by the true principles of Christian unity ; and many were added to those already gathered to the Lord's Name. The number of Meetings increased very fast. In other countries also the truth spread in like manner, so that for about thirty years there was a season of much blessing, and true Christian fellowship was much enjoyed amongst Brethren.

But other trials awaited them. Satan had his eye upon what God was doing, and he knows well how to mar God's work when it is in the hands of man in his responsibility.

The great privileges enjoyed by Christians who simply received the truth of God from His Word correspondingly heightened their responsibility, and God always tests faith. While the death and resurrection of Christ brings the believer into a place of acceptance before God ; yet we learn the blessedness and reality of it in walking according to it while here in this world. It is one thing to be saved through the blood of Christ by the sovereign grace of God, but quite another to learn how to walk in subjection to God and His Word after we are saved. A person may be saved, and yet never learn the blessedness of true subjection to Christ, Who "has died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor. v. 15).

The actions of Christians are governed by the object of their hearts. If Christ be the object, *then* His Word governs their actions. If self be the object, *then* opinions govern their actions. It is this that really accounts for the divided state of Christians to-day. If one has Christ as his object, and another self, then there is no oneness of thought or true fellowship ; and it is soon manifest that two cannot walk together except they be agreed.

When God has accomplished His purpose concerning His Church, then all true Christians will be made *perfect in one* in the glory of God, Christ will then be the object and delight of every heart, and all Christians will be agreed that *Christ is all* and in all, and that nothing should have been allowed to come in between them and His interests while they were here upon earth.

But alas ! the power of good in Christ does not altogether govern the hearts of God's children ; so that God has in all

ages allowed difficulties to arise to try the faith of His elect. But this only turns out to the blessing of His own, for He maketh "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom. viii. 28).

The Christian has an inheritance reserved for him in heaven, and he is kept by the power of God *through faith* unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time; in which he greatly rejoices, though now for a season, if need be, he is in heaviness through manifold temptations; but this is in order that the trial of his faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen, he loves; in whom though now he sees Him not, yet believing, he rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory (1 Peter i.).

Throughout the New Testament the Christian meets with the fact that he is not only called to believe in Christ, but also to *suffer for His sake*. The Lord Jesus would not deceive His disciples. He said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John xvi. 33).

He said also of the Apostle Paul, "I will show him how great things he *must suffer* for My Name's sake" (Acts ix. 16).

To the early Christians the same Apostle wrote, "That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation, even as it came to pass, and ye know" (1 Thess. iii. 3-4). Yet "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii. 18).

The power of God and the grace of Christ enable Christians to rejoice that they are counted *worthy to suffer* for His Name (Acts v. 41) knowing that if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him, but if we deny Him, He also will deny us; if we are unfaithful, He abides faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

God was about to pass His children through another trial, and many were shortly to prove the truth of the Lord's own words, "Think ye I have come to send peace on earth? I tell you, nay, but rather division," etc. This is what actually took place, and great was the sorrow and anguish of many a heart; for hearts were getting divided, and attracted by other objects than Christ. Great multitudes had been gathered to His Name, and had come out to Christ to bear "His reproach," and He, as it were, turned and said unto them, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple" (Luke xiv. 25-27).

He knew well how to order circumstances so that the heart of the individual Christian was tested. The question was raised, Who is to be first, Christ or self? Christ or my dearest relation? Christ or some servant of the Lord? If we allow anything to come in between our souls and Christ, so that He has not the first place, we are sure to turn away from following Him! On the other hand, if we are subject to Him, it is in these trials we learn what the love, compassion, and sympathy is of our God and Father through our Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SECOND DIVISION.

WE turn now to the second division amongst Brethren, and in considering first the cause of it, we need not go beyond Mr. Neatby's book for our information; for although he has certainly written with a strong prejudice governing his mind, yet I believe he has desired in this part to give, as far as he could under such circumstances, a true history.

It appears that there had been a Meeting at Ryde for many years, but not a very happy one, because of its low spiritual state. Yet it had not been rejected as off the ground of God's Assembly.

This Meeting could not be said to have been in a worse moral state than that of the Church at Corinth, which the Apostle Paul pressed to right itself by judging the evil in its midst. He in nowise sought to set it aside, but recognized it as an Assembly of God.

"In the autumn of 1878," writes Mr. Neatby, "a young clergyman by the name of Finch, resident in Ryde, left the communion of the Church of England, and was received into fellowship . . . in London. It seems that he made it plain that he would not feel at liberty on his return to Ryde to associate himself with the Temperance Hall Meeting; but this did not hinder his reception. He began the observance of the Lord's Supper in his own house, with some that had followed him out of the Established Church. In February Dr. Cronin visited Ryde, and took the communion with Mr. Finch at this private Meeting. He repeated the act a few weeks later, and by his advice the Meeting was transferred to the Masonic Hall" (page 286).

Now, Mr. Finch's act was an independent one, he did not recognize the previous work the Spirit of God had done in Ryde in gathering saints together to the Lord's Name as members of His body. Mr. Finch's Meeting was practically on the same ground as that of "Open Brethren." The latter have no thought of walking together as members of the body of Christ, but simply as individual Christians.

But this is not so with those Christians who seek to be found walking in the truth of the unity of the body of Christ, namely, Many members, but "one body," all united by "one Spirit."

This made Dr. Cronin's act a very grave one in connection with these principles, and had the dear old saint known what he was doing, we think he would have been the very last brother to have done it. But we must look at the matter as it presents itself to us twenty years after.

What has been done cannot be altered; but the Christian to-day has to take into account two Meetings professedly on the same ground but not united!

This is a serious matter as well as a reproach; yet the Christian must judge by the Word of God, which is walking according to the true principles of Christian unity if he desires to walk with God and other Christians as a member of the body of Christ.

Mr. Neatby puts this as a most difficult task. It is, however, not so if the eye is single, for then the whole body is full of light; one must be near enough to the Lord to know His mind about such matters. The nearer we walk with Him in communion the easier it is to get His mind. This was manifest in John, when he leaned on Jesus' breast at supper. He could ask the Lord who should betray Him. And so it still is. God deals with the moral state of our souls in connection with the things of the Church of God.

Dr. Cronin's act identified him with Mr. Finch's independent and private Meeting, and had the dear brother remained at Ryde there would have been no difficulty in the matter; for all were agreed that Mr. Finch's was an independent table and meeting. But when Dr. Cronin returned to London he sought to identify other Meetings with Mr. Finch's independent table, which resulted in a division, and a new character of Meetings being formed in many places.

Mr. Darby, who was soon after to be called away, maintained the same principles of unity that he had from the very first contended for; but Mr. Neatby seems to have a difficulty in distinguishing the difference between the respective acts of Dr. Cronin and Mr. Darby. He says, "The difficulty is to distinguish in principle between Cronin's act at Ryde, and Darby's secession from Ebrington Street thirty-four years earlier. Both steps were taken on purely individual responsibility."

Although the two actions are very similar, it needs only a little spiritual understanding to distinguish between them.

In the case of Mr. Darby, we have seen that he did not leave the Plymouth Meeting until he had testified to it as

to the evil in its midst, seeking to bring the consciences of the Brethren into exercise, that they might judge the evil, and clear themselves before the Lord. Instead of their doing this, it became evident that the Meeting was leavened by the evil; and in sheltering Mr. Newton it gave up the principles upon which it was gathered. Therefore the constitution of the Meeting being changed, he separated himself from the evil according to the Word of God.

But his action was not an independent, although an individual one, inasmuch as it had full reference to the Meeting he had left. He then waited in patience and grace for two months for the Meeting to right itself, so that he might return if it did so.

Dr. Cronin's act was altogether an *independent* one. In no way did he first testify to the Ryde Meeting that it should judge the evil in its midst; but by his act he cut off the righteous with the wicked. God would have spared all Sodom if he had found ten righteous in it!

It seems that it was lack of patience and grace that led to a *misjudgment* and an *independent act*, which ultimately caused this widespread division amongst Brethren.

I do not go into all the labyrinth of controversy that followed Dr. Cronin's act, nor do I attempt to justify the actions of either party; but I desire to bow my head down, and own how much self-seeking there is amongst Christians even when they are contending for right principles.

But God can control all hearts, and I would not dare to put forth my hand to steady the Ark. The whole matter is in the Lord's own hands, and He will very soon present the Church to Himself without "spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." Here I find rest amidst all the scattering and divided state of the Church of God.

But as the Church is still upon the earth, we must not shirk our individual responsibility in connection with these things. God has provided a way for His children to walk in love, peace and unity, while here upon earth; but if His children ignore His principles, then confusion must follow even in His own house. Yet, going back to and seeking to maintain God's principles will restore love, peace, and unity amongst the children of God; and if this cannot be enjoyed as a whole, it may be by those who appreciate it.

This now brings us to three distinct characters of Meetings of Brethren.

First. Those who remained on the ground taken by Brethren at the first, as members of the body of Christ, gathered to His Name in separation from evil. These Meetings were formed about the year 1830.

Second. Those known as "Open Brethren." Their Meetings were first established in 1845-1848 on neutral principles, or indifference to the claims of Christ when the glory of His Person was called in question by Mr. Newton.

Third. Those on independent ground, who, while professing to walk in the unity of the Church of God, established Meetings in 1880 on the principles of Ecclesiastical Independency, in connection with Dr. Cronin's independent act.

It was not long after this second division that Mr. Darby was called home to his rest. To the very last he manifested an interest in the Lord's work, and a care for His saints. The following letters which may interest the reader were addressed to the brethren in Christ with whom he was associated not long before he died:—

✕ "My Beloved Brethren,—After years of communion in weakness, I have only bodily strength to write a few lines, more of affection than aught else. I bear witness to the love, not only in the Lord ever faithful, but in my beloved brethren in all patience towards me, how much more, then, from God: unfeignedly do I bear witness to it. Yet I can say Christ has been my only object—thank God, my righteousness too. I am not aware of anything to recall—little to add. Hold fast to Him. *Count* on abundant grace in Him, to reproduce Him in the power of the Father's love; and be watching and waiting for Christ. I have no more to add, but my unfeigned love and thankful affection in Him. ➤

"I do add, let not John's ministry be forgotten in insisting on Paul's. One gives the dispensation in which the display is: the other, that which is displayed."

"Beloved Brethren, I feel satisfied that if there be a godly recognition of God's hand upon us, and lowly

confidence in the purpose of the Father for the glory of His own Son, there will be a great deal of blessing, and spreading forth into the doors which He opens."

March 19th, 1882.

"The first and the essential question for every living man before God is, how he can be in His presence, well-pleasing to Him. (Phil. iii. 7-10.) It is no question of a righteousness which could satisfy the claims which He has on man: he is already a sinner, and entirely alienated from the glory of God: he perishes without law; he is condemned by the law. (See Romans ii. and iii.) Now the infinite love of God, seeing him in this condition, spared not His own Son (see Rom. iii.) in order to blot out all the sins of those who believe on Him, and by accomplishing a work which, while perfectly glorifying God, rendered at the same time those who have part in it fit, as the Man who had accomplished it, for the glory of God, so that they became the righteousness of God in Him. It was a part of this righteousness to put them in the glory where Christ was, without which He would not have seen of the fruit of the travail of His soul. Many benefits and a new life accompany this blessing; but I have only laid the foundation.

"Receive, beloved reader, this testimony to the efficacy of the love of which I speak, and that He has given peace with God for eternity."

March 28th, 1882. (Letters of J. N. D., Vol. III., pp. 345-6.)

Mr. Neatby considers that the whole of that for which Mr. Darby laboured, from the age of about twenty-five years to that of four-score years, was a "fascination," and collapsed just before he died; but this is because Mr. Neatby apparently has not the slightest conception of what it was that governed the mind and heart of this true servant of Christ, nor of that for which he laboured.

The great central thought of all Mr. Darby's actions in connection with ecclesiastical principles was the fact that Christ and the Church *are* one. Anything and everything that was introduced that would falsify this truth he strongly

opposed, and looked upon it as the work of the enemy, whoever might be the tool that Satan used.

It is a fact that all true Christians *are one in Christ, and members of His body and of one another.* This fact he pressed upon believers all his life.

He maintained that this unity had been formed by the Holy Ghost baptizing all true believers into one body, of which Christ, who is at God's right hand in heaven, is the Head, to Whom the Church, which is His body and His Bride, is also united by the Holy Ghost.

He maintained that believers who form the Church, according to the eternal purpose of God, are predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ in the glory of God in heaven; where this unity will be displayed before a wondering world; and the prayer of Christ to His Father answered, viz. "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them: that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made *perfect in one*, and that the *world may know* that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me" (John xvii.).

He maintained that, while the Church was being gathered out by the Holy Ghost, God had set it up upon the earth in responsibility, to manifest this oneness to the world as a testimony to the fact that the Father had sent His Son; so that the world might believe.

He also maintained that in this the Church had failed, and had become in its outward manifestation a ruined and corrupt system.

He maintained that the right attitude of those Christians who saw the breakdown and failure of the Church in its responsibility was to own and confess it before God in true humbleness of spirit, identifying themselves in their confession with all the ruin and corruption of the Church, as Daniel and other servants of God had done in like circumstances with respect to Israel.

He maintained that the only remedy was to return to the first principles upon which the Church was constituted, and seek *as a remnant* to walk in the unity that God Himself had formed. For this he and those with him took the ground given in Matt. xviii. 20, as gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, as members of His body.

He maintained that to be owned by God as in this position, the principles of holiness and truth must be held to at all cost.

He much appreciated the Lord's love and mercy to himself as an individual, and valued the place of nearness into which the blood of Christ had brought him before God in righteousness. He accordingly wrote and sang—

“And is it so? I shall be like Thy Son!
Is this the grace which He for me has won?
Father of glory! thought beyond all thought;
In glory to His Own blest likeness brought.

O Jesus, Lord: who loved me like to Thee?
Fruit of Thy work! with Thee, too, there to see
Thy glory, Lord, while endless ages roll,—
Myself the prize and travail of Thy soul.”

Yet he did not narrow these infinite blessings around himself, but delighted to embrace in them all God's children. He therefore added,

“Yet it must be! Thy love had not its rest,
Were Thy redeemed not with Thee fully blest,
That love that gives not as the world, but shares
All it possesses, with its loved co-heirs.

Nor I alone; Thy loved ones all, complete
In glory around Thee, with joy shall meet!
All like Thee: for Thy glory like Thee, Lord!
Object supreme of all, by all adored!”

For Christ and His Church Mr. Darby laboured during more than half a century. That God raised up for Himself a testimony through the truths which this servant of His held and taught cannot be denied: nor can it be denied that there were, and are still, many adversaries.

But Mr. Darby was called home; he ceased from his labours and entered into his rest; but certainly one of his greatest joys is yet to come, which will be to see in the glory of God the full manifestation of the fact that *Christ and His Church are one.*

He left behind him the truths he taught and held; but he left them where he found them, in the Word of the living God. He might have said, "After my decease shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them"; for surely this has come to pass. But our resource is in God, and the Word of His grace.

CHAPTER VII.

MY OWN CONNECTION WITH "BRETHREN."

IT was not until the early Autumn of 1884, two years after the death of Mr. Darby, that I knew anything about Brethren, or the position they professed to hold: nor did I get the knowledge of the truth through them or their writings.

I had been a member of a Baptist Church for some time; but God in His grace revealed to me through His Word and by His Spirit the fact that being a believer in the Lord Jesus, I belonged to Christ where He is in the glory, that I was a member of His body, and that all Christians were members one of another as being baptized by one Spirit into one body.

But not knowing there were any Christians walking in this truth I necessarily thought I should have to walk alone, for I saw nothing but sects all around, which simply deny in their outward manifestation that all Christians are one in Christ.

Nevertheless I soon came in contact with some Christians who told me they were walking in this truth. I then had to face the difficulty of three Meetings in one town, all professing to be walking in the truth, yet not together in unity and fellowship. I ultimately found myself identified with those who act upon the truth that separation from evil is God's principle of unity.

But I soon found I was in a place of difficulty and trial, and that men act in self-will amongst Brethren as well as with other Christians, and that a Christian must, wherever he is, "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good."

CHAPTER VIII.

MORE TRIALS.

THE next trials Brethren had to encounter were in connection with the doctrines of Mr. Stuart of Reading and Mr. Grant of America. There was no difficulty in seeing that neither had scriptural ground for their respective doctrines, yet they both drew away disciples after them.

The Word of God is binding that Christians should all speak the same thing and all be of one mind, and unless there be truth there cannot be practical unity, and Scripture says, "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable" (James iii. 17).

The doctrines that these two men introduced disturbed the minds of Brethren, which resulted in a separation both in England and America.

But speaking of Mr. Stuart and his party, Mr. Neatby says, "The one happy result of this disruption was that the . . . party seems to have decided to abandon . . . discipline altogether, and to heartily welcome any godly member of the body of Christ apart altogether from questions of a mere ecclesiastical kind. This appears to mean that, while retaining their own list of recognized Meetings, and their own internal procedure, they place Open Brethren, Kellyites, and the adherents of whatever other varieties of Plymouthism there may be, on the same footing for 'occasional communion' as the members of any other evangelical denomination." He adds also, "This happy example was followed in 1892, by the Grantites in America" (page 313).

It may not appear to the reader that such a principle, or really lack of principle, opens the door for all manner of

evil. It is forming gatherings of Christians without any constitution whatever, by the giving up of every divine principle that would guard the children of God from the attacks of the enemy, or of the inroads of the wolves that come in to scatter the sheep and lambs of Christ's flock.

Brethren who accept this ground find out where they are. It matters not what evil doctrine may be advanced, what moral corruption may come in, all are powerless to deal with it. It is perfect indifference to the claims of Him who resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

Although the ground taken by Brethren, whose principles are according to holiness and truth, seems to be narrow, it is only exclusive in that it shuts out what is dishonouring to the Name of Him who is holy and true; to whose Name they are gathered. But the ground is broad enough to embrace ALL the children of God in the spirit of holiness and truth; according to the Spirit of Him who says, "I have a few things against thee, because thou hast them that hold the doctrine of Balaam . . . So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate" (Rev. ii. 14, 15).

CHAPTER IX.

DEPARTURE FROM THE TRUTH IN THE ACCEPTANCE OF MR. F. E. RAVEN'S DOCTRINES.

THE division caused by the pressing of Mr. F. E. Raven's doctrines, and the sorrows Brethren had to pass through on account of them, God knows all about: and while it remains for us to own our common shame in the dishonour done to our Blessed Saviour and Lord, yet God will surely hold those teachers responsible who forced upon His children doctrines that were not only subversive of Christianity, but which also set aside the glory of the Person of Christ as God manifest in the flesh.

Subtlety and deceit characterized the introduction of these doctrines. Truths that had been held and taught amongst Brethren for upwards of sixty years, were little by little called in question and given up.

Those who took the place of teachers amongst Brethren, were careful at the first to see that their teaching and preaching had a positive character. The power of the truth of God is in the fact *that it is absolute.*

It was this that delivered souls; and by the work of the Spirit many were brought into true Christian liberty, who had been kept in bondage for years.

It had always been insisted upon amongst Brethren that the results of the work of Christ for the believer were absolute, bringing him into a present standing of acceptance before God in Christ in absolute righteousness.

It had also been insisted upon that to the believer God imparted a new life, by which he was alive unto God; that He had quickened the soul previously dead in trespasses and sins into life by His Word and Spirit, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that this life itself was in the Son as to its source and nature; therefore Christ is Personally the life of every Christian, and on account of this the Lord said, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John xiv. 19), and, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Col. iii. 4).

Brethren also insisted that Christ Personally was that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and had been manifested in this world, the Word of Life.

The Apostle John bears out this fact in the following scripture: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us). That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full" (1 John i. 1-4).

To every subject mind it will be easily seen that the Apostle is speaking of the Lord Jesus, the Son of God as He was seen and known here in a human body; *seen with natural eyes*, contemplated, and *handled with natural hands*; and as so seen and so handled, he presents Him personally to us as the Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested in this world.

The very fact of a few Christians seeking to walk in the truth makes them an object of attack on the part of those who oppose the truth, and of Satan himself, who has too well succeeded in marring all that God has done for the blessing of our souls, while here in this world. Thank God, none can pluck Christ's sheep out of His hand; yet all the time the devil can worry them he will. But where souls are simple, and just take their stand upon the Word of God, they are protected, and the wicked one touches them not.

All the preciousness and reality of these truths that God had brought to light in these last days stood in the way of Mr. Raven and his doctrines. He, therefore, had to find out a way whereby he could set them aside, in order to introduce his own theories.

First, he denied the fact that Christ, personally, was Eternal Life, in the following words: "The effort of many is to maintain that Eternal Life is a person. I am not prepared to accept this." He also states, "Scripture does not speak of Christ having been that Eternal Life which was with the Father before the world was."

Secondly, he denied in the following words that Christians are made absolutely now the righteousness of God in Christ. His words are, "The key to almost all I have said lies in my objection to apply in an absolute way to the believer, in his mixed condition down here, statements of Scripture which refer to what he is, or what is true of him, viewed as in Christ. Such a practice results in the statements becoming mere dogmas, conveying little sense of reality. This may be seen in regard to divine righteousness, as spoken of in 2 Cor. v. 21."*

* "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

Thirdly, he denied that to the believer is imparted a new life by which he exists before God. These are his words: "Scripture does not, I think, speak of our having eternal life imparted to us."

Mr. Raven's idea of eternal life is a mere *character* of life. This can easily be seen by the following statements of his, "It used to be commonly said, I know that I have got Eternal Life. Why? Because the Scripture says, 'He that believeth hath everlasting life.' I say, you have thus the faith of Eternal Life, but that does not prove you have the thing itself."

Again, "Many Christians have the light of Eternal Life, but they have not gone the road to touch it, and I do not much think they intend to go that road." "If I came across any one who asserted it,* at the present time, I would be disposed to say, If you have got it, *let us have an account of it*. Our difficulty in England was that nobody could give an account of eternal life."

No thought is there in Mr. Raven's mind that a believer has had imparted to him a life by which he exists before God in righteousness through the blood of Christ.

Mr. Raven reduces the blessedness of this to a mere manner of living: and as we should say naturally, "country life" or "continental life," so he uses the term "Eternal Life" as a "technical expression," thus robbing the believer of the reality of his existence before God as quickened together with Christ.

Nothing short of a positive refusal of these God-dishonouring and soul-robbing doctrines, on the one hand, and an absolute separation from the Meetings that accepted them on the other, would meet the claims of Christ upon every one whom He has bought and redeemed by His precious blood.

Thank God, this is what took place, although every effort was made by Mr. Raven and his friends to keep souls in the dark.

This separation was a sore trial to the Lord's people who sought to be faithful, for it became a question of

* That is, that he possessed Eternal Life, being born of God.

standing true to Christ and His Word, or becoming a supporter of Mr. Raven and his new theories.

Every heart was tried, and the Lord's own word became a test and exercise to many a troubled spirit: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me" (Matt. x. 37-38).

From this time, 1890, another character of Meetings of Brethren was formed. These Meetings were established upon the acceptance of Mr. Raven's new theories, and are known as "in fellowship with Mr. Raven."

As Mr. Neatby's book has raised much controversy about Brethren's Meetings, it may interest the reader to know that about two years ago I received a letter from an unknown person, in which he asked me amongst other questions, the two following, "What is your opinion of Brethren"? and "Where do you go on a Lord's Day"?

I here give my answer (a little altered for publication), which will serve to sum up the foregoing.

"The next question I take up is, 'What is your opinion of Brethren'? This, in one sense, embraces all the children of God, but I take it you mean the Christians that are now known as 'Brethren.'* Well, to be honest, I look upon them as a company of Christians upon whom a great responsibility rests. They have had untold privileges heaped upon them by God in these last days; but as a whole they have not risen up to the height of these privileges, nor appreciated as they ought the truth committed to them. Therefore they have failed in their responsibility; and God has blown upon their pride, and allowed them to become a reproach to the very truth He called them to walk in.

"Some sixty or seventy years ago God worked in the hearts of many of His own, and gave them to see in the Word, and by the Spirit, that 'there is one body,' and that all believers in the Lord Jesus belong to that 'one

* Some time ago a gentleman (Dr. A.) asked me to give him my vote at the coming election; and in course of conversation he further asked me if I belonged to the Plymouth Brethren? I immediately answered, "Thank God, no! I belong to Christ where He is in the glory; and to every other Christian on the face of the earth."

body' which is the body of Christ. They therefore separated themselves from the various sects, which practically deny this truth, and they simply came together as members of the body of Christ, and were gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ alone, thus in principle embracing all believers; for they spread the Lord's Table according to the true principles of Christianity, as made known in the Word of God; and they came together in the same way as Christians did in the days of the Apostles. But as the company increased, so worldliness crept in, and God allowed them to be tried and tested, by Satan raising up false teachers amongst them, who have drawn away disciples after them, and other evils which have caused division and contention everywhere; so that instead of 'Brethren' being a testimony to the truth of the 'one body' they are a reproach to this very truth.

"Yet I believe there is a remnant who are still going on with God in this truth, who endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. It is with this company I am identified, and with whom I meet on the Lord's Day. We simply come together as members of the body of Christ, and are gathered only to His Name. Thus we embrace in our faith and principles the whole Church of God, but have been obliged to separate from others on account of the leaven of evil they are identified with.

"There are four Meetings of 'Brethren' here; one is known as 'Open Brethren.' These are a body of dear Christians; yet the commencement of their meeting together was through their refusing to judge false doctrine, which tarnished the glory of our blessed Lord, and lowered Him to the level of mortal man.

"Another Meeting here is on independent ground, through spreading an independent table at a place where the Lord's Table was already spread, thus violating the unity of the Spirit.

"The third is in association with doctrines that not only deny the present standing before God of the believer in righteousness in Christ, but which are most dishonouring to our Lord Jesus Christ Himself; Satan having used Mr. Raven to take advantage of the humiliation of our blessed Lord by calling in question His Godhead glory.

“All these evils must be separated from if we are to walk with God together. We find this principle laid down in Rom. xvi. 17 and 2 Tim. ii. 19—end, where we read, ‘Let him that nameth the Name of the Lord depart from iniquity.’ If saints did not so act there would be no testimony left, because ‘a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.’”

Now it will readily be seen that, amidst all the trials, conflicts and controversies Brethren have had to encounter, God has preserved a remnant according to His own wisdom and grace, who still seek to walk in the true principles of Christian unity taken by Brethren at the first; principles firmly established by the Word of God; and that no failure on the part of those who seek to walk in them can alter; principles that every Christian is responsible to learn, and then seek grace to walk in, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

CHAPTER X.

THE PURPOSE OF GOD IN RAISING UP A FINAL TESTIMONY.

THERE is yet one inquiry more that must be made before bringing this Defence to a close, viz., What has been the purpose of God in raising up a testimony to the fact that all true Christians are one in Christ?

It is evident that a great crisis is before both the Church and the world. In fact, already the tide has turned; that which only a spiritual eye could discern fifty years ago is now manifest to all.

With regard to the world, it is about to form a great confederacy of nations, for the supposed advancement of civilization and the peace of the world; but this I leave, my interests are not in it. It is the future of the Church that is of the deepest interest to my soul; and this, as a system existing upon the earth, is about to form a great confederacy too; or would it be better to say, the language being more acceptable, is about to form a reunion of all the churches?

The all-seeing eye of God penetrated through the course of the ages and saw that in the Twentieth Century the Church, as known in this world, would form a unity that is not of Himself, which would lead to the full development of the "mystery of iniquity" that was at work as early as the days of the Apostles, thus bringing in the open apostasy of the Church. This apostasy will be a universal departure from the faith, through men having "crept in unawares . . . ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude iv.). Also "false teachers," who have brought in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, who will "bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Peter ii. 1). Men, too, who are lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, unholy, false accusers, despisers of those who are good, high-minded, reprobate concerning the faith (2 Tim. 3), having departed from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils (1 Tim. iv.).

All this wickedness will form part of that which constitutes the reunion of the Churches! But why? Simply because the professing Church has rejected God's own principles of unity.

But had God allowed the Church to develop into a unity or confederacy of wickedness and apostasy without first presenting to it His own true unity, the boastful Church of the Twentieth Century might have an excuse to say when its destruction comes: Had we only known the truth, and that which was really of God, we would have walked in His ways! But, alas! now it has no excuse.

My answer, therefore, to the question, What has been the purpose of God in raising up a final testimony to the fact that all true Christians are one in Christ? is, He did it to justify Himself in His future ways with the Church, both in connection with His own eternal purpose and with its responsibility.

It is evident that there are two distinct elements in the Church, and that it can be viewed in two distinct aspects. There is (1) that which is of God, wholly the work of the Holy Ghost, in which man may or may not be used as a vessel prepared by God to every good work; and there is

(2) that which is of man, and only of man. These two aspects are never confounded in Scripture.

The first revelation Scripture gives of the Church, according to God's mind and thoughts, is in Matt. xvi. 18. There Christ says (Peter having confessed Him to be "the Son of the living God"), "Upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Then we find in Acts ii. the Holy Ghost has come down from Christ, who is exalted at God's right hand in heaven, and has baptized His disciples into one body, thus forming the Church and establishing it upon the earth. This is not taught in so many words, but those who believed on the day of Pentecost and thenceforth were added to the Church that had already been formed; for "the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved" (Acts ii. 47).

In the Epistle to the Ephesians the Church is spoken of as an holy temple in the Lord—an habitation of God through the Spirit. Also that Christ has loved the Church, and given Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish (Eph. v.).

The nature of the blessings of those who form the Church are heavenly in character, "Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. i.). That it has not yet been brought into the sphere of its blessings is evident, but that it will is a fact, for "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear *with Him in glory*" (Col. iii. 4).

This is the Church's hope, and "if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Rom. viii. 25).

The Lord Jesus, before He left this world, promised to come again and receive us unto Himself, "that where He is there we may be also" (John xvi. 1-3).

The purpose of God, therefore, according to His eternal counsels respecting the Church, will not be fully accomplished until every true believer in the Lord Jesus has been

put into the same glory that Christ Himself is in, and in which He will be displayed when He reappears.

In connection with that glorious moment, "we shall not all sleep" (that is, die), but we shall all be changed—the dead raised—the living changed; according to the unalterable Word of the Living God (1 Cor. xv. 51-58).

"For this I say unto you," says the Apostle, "by the *Word of the Lord*, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. iv. 15-17).

It is evident, therefore, that God has His own fixed purpose and plan concerning the Church, which He will assuredly carry out; that the accomplishment of His eternal purposes and counsels have not been entrusted to man; that God Himself is doing all things after the counsel of His own will by the Holy Ghost, who has come down from heaven to dwell in the Church on earth; that the work of the Spirit will not be complete until the Church, which really forms the body of Christ, has been removed from this world to heaven, to occupy its appointed position in heavenly places according to that which God purposed in Christ before the foundation of the world.

Then the work of the Holy Ghost will be as complete as the work of the Lord Jesus, who was able to say to His Father, "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John xvii.).

To this man has nothing to say; he is but the material God uses for the composing of the building. The act of building is God's: Christ had said, "*I will build My Church.*" He is the Rock upon which the Church is built. The Apostles and New Testament prophets are the foundation; "Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. ii.).

True believers—those only who have been born of God by the Word and Spirit—compose this structure; for they

only are living stones, and this is the character of material God uses in His building. Of this the Apostle Peter plainly speaks, first of Christ, being the "Living Stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious," then of believers: "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house" (1 Peter ii. 4-5). This is all confirmed by the Apostle Paul, who says, "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. ii. 21-22).

In this perfection God established the Church upon the earth, although its place according to the divine counsels is heaven: and this perfection should have been maintained and manifested to the world as a testimony to God's grace and goodness in sending His beloved Son into this world as a Saviour, who has accomplished redemption by the shedding of His own precious blood.

This brings in the responsibility of the Church, or the other aspect in which the Church must be viewed; for although I have spoken of the perfection of God's work, the work of the Holy Ghost, that it will be, when fully accomplished, as perfect as the atoning work of Christ, yet God has been pleased to put the responsibility of the testimony of His grace into the hands of man. He did so in order that in the first place, Christians, as children of God, should display to the world the unity of the family of God in all affection and love one towards another; "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John xiii. 35). This would have been a marked contrast to all the selfishness and self-seeking that the world manifests.

It was also the responsibility of Christians to manifest the unity of the Church as a body united together by the Holy Ghost, to own the Lordship and Headship and the corresponding claims of Him whom this world has rejected and crucified, but whom God has raised from the dead, and set at His own right hand in heavenly places. . . . Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all (Eph. i. 20, 23).

In this the Church has completely failed; for although at the first all were of "one heart and one soul: neither

said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common" (Acts iv. 32), and the power of the Holy Ghost was there to maintain the blessedness of this, through true subjection to Christ, yet it was soon manifested that all sought their own, and not the things that are Jesus Christ's (Phil. ii.).

The great contrast between what the Church was at the first and what it has become to-day in this world is manifest to all.

Fast developing into apostasy, having abandoned the truth, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils,—the Church boasts itself that it is rich and increased with goods and has need of nothing. Instead of walking in separation from the world as that which is for God in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, it is one in heart with that world which rejected the Lord; it no longer owns the claims of Christ upon it. Speaking lies in hypocrisy, it invents all manner of charms to attract and beguile unwary and simple souls; evil men and seducers waxing worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

Alas! the Church now rejects the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures: clergymen of all ranks, ministers of all classes of Dissent, openly oppose and seek to set aside the fundamental truths of the Christian's faith. "A new theology," "a twentieth-century theology," has already been introduced on account of the attitude taken against the Bible by doctors of divinity, professors of theology, and all classes of teachers amongst professed Christians.

A thoroughly worldly element has also overrun the professing Church. What could only be found at one time in the world, is now provided by the Church for the entertainment and amusement of the masses.

Not long ago I was speaking to an infidel about Christ and His Word. He immediately called my attention to what was going on in the Churches—the concerts—the theatrical performances—the trading, etc., etc., as a ground for reproaching Christ and rejecting His claims upon him. He also said that there was scarcely a minister who did not, in some way or other, now hold the same views as himself,

calling my attention to the theories of the then highest dignitary in the Church of England.

My reply was, "The judgment of God will come upon it all." This is plainly stated in Scripture, "Judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Peter, iv. 17-18).

Listen to the words of Christ respecting the Church in its present state: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, *I will spue thee out of My mouth.* Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing: and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. iii. 15-17).

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. vi. 7-8).

CHAPTER XI.

"HOLD FAST."

"THAT which ye have already, hold fast till I come," is the Word of Christ to every Christian.

Considering the present attitude of the clergy and other ministers in reference to the Bible, every true believer in the Lord Jesus should take a definite and individual stand for Christ and the truths of Christianity; otherwise we shall be robbed of our privileges, and lose the sense of the blessedness of that which has been secured to us at so great a cost.

For our mutual help I should like to go over with the Christian reader the fundamental truths of our common faith; and then see from the Word of God wherein our

resources lie, that we may be preserved from being overwhelmed by the torrent of iniquity that is overrunning the profession of Christianity.

I. AS TO CHRIST.

First of all, we are unfeigned believers in the inspiration and divine authority of the Holy Scriptures. It is through the written Word of God that we have the knowledge of God Himself. It is that Word which is to us the one all-powerful link between our souls and the living God, as that which testifies of Christ from beginning to end, so we have become profound believers in Him, but believers in Him as He is presented in the Scriptures:—

First, as the "Seed of the woman" that should bruise the serpent's head; that is, as the One who should come to set aside the power of evil in this world as manifested in man under the power of the devil.

Secondly, as the "Seed of Abraham" in whom all blessing centres, for "in thy Seed," says God, "shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

Thirdly, as the "Son of David," but who was withal to "rise to reign over the Gentiles."

Fourthly, as the one "of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write."

Fifthly, as the Word that was with God, and was God, and became flesh to dwell with mankind in order to reveal and manifest God in all that He is in Himself. "God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. iii. 16). "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. v. 19).

Sixthly, as "the Son of man" of whom it is written, "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the *son of man* that Thou visitest Him? For Thou hast made Him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned Him with glory and honor. Thou madest Him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands" (Ps. viii.; Heb. ii.).

Seventhly, as "the Son of God," in whom God has spoken to man in these last days; whom God hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom also He made the

worlds ; who is the brightness of the glory and the express image of the substance of God—the One who upholds all things by the word of His power, and who, having accomplished redemption, has sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. i.).

Thus in incarnation we believe God presented Himself in the Person of His Son to this world, as the One who had come to fulfil all promise ; as the all-powerful One to deliver mankind from the power and thralldom of Satan ; as the One in whom all blessing centred, saying, "Come unto Me . . . and I will give you rest," fully manifesting by His works His power over Satan, under whose dominion man is ; for He "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil ; for God was with Him" (Acts x.) He Himself testified that "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world ; but that the world through Him might be saved" (John iii. 17).

We find in Scripture that this manifestation of all that God is in goodness and grace only brought out the hatred and enmity of man's heart against God ; as the Lord Jesus said, "Now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father" (John xv. 24), and, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee" (John xvii. 25).

We find that the expression of this hatred on man's part was fully manifested by his crowning the Saviour with thorns, spitting in His face, and then nailing Him to a common Roman gibbet between two thieves !

We find that the Son of God, whom the Father sent to be the Saviour of the world, returned to heaven as the despised, rejected and murdered Son of man ; to whom God has said, "Sit Thou on My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool" (Ps. cx. 1 ; Heb. i. 13).

2. AS TO BELIEVERS INDIVIDUALLY.

We find in Scripture that although the world has, by the rejection of the Saviour, proved itself to be entirely under the power of Satan, God has sent a message of pardon and peace by the Gospel ; that all who believe that God has raised up Christ from the dead, are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the

law of Moses. Christ having accomplished redemption by the shedding of His own blood, enables God in righteousness to be the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus (Acts xiii. ; Rom. iii.).

Now as those who have believed the Gospel, we find that Christ has given Himself for our sins in order that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God our Father (Gal. i. 4).

That God "hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light"; that He "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, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col. i. 12-14).

That although we were guilty and lost sinners; God now justifies us "freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. iii.).

That believing in God, who has raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. iv. v.).

That "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

That Christ having died for us, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

That although once enemies, we are now reconciled to God by the death of His Son, and on this account we shall be saved in the power of His life. "And not only so, but we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom we have now received the reconciliation" (Rom. v.).

That we are now under a new headship; that having been identified with Christ in His death, we have died from under the headship of the first man Adam, and are alive to God under the Headship of Christ the Second Man and Last Adam. We therefore reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. vi.).

That Christ, who knew no sin, has been made sin for us; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. v.).

So that, as we have borne the image of the earthy one (Adam), we shall also bear the image of the heavenly One (Christ) (1 Cor. xv.).

That we are predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son; that He should be the firstborn among many brethren (Rom. viii.).

Already, we have become sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and because we are sons, God hath sent forth *the Spirit of His Son* into our hearts crying, Abba, Father (Gal. iii. iv.).

Thus the Spirit of God Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ (Rom. viii.).

Scripture plainly states that our blessings, as believers in the Lord Jesus, are spiritual and heavenly in their nature; not temporal and earthly.

That we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before God in love; God having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved (Eph. i.).

These are our individual blessings, being the common portion of true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. AS TO BELIEVERS COLLECTIVELY.

Moreover, we find in Scripture that Christians hold a distinct collective position before God, according to His eternal counsels which He purposed in Christ before the foundation of the world.

This brings in the Church, or Assembly of God; it is composed of all true believers in the Lord Jesus. They are inseparably united by the Holy Spirit baptizing all believers into one body, of which Christ is the Head. This is the Church according to God, the mystery in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; that by the Church might be known the manifold wisdom of God; it

being the fulness of Him that filleth all in all (1 Cor. xii. ; Col. ii. ; Eph. i.-iii.).

We find the Church, so viewed, is very precious in the sight of God, He having purchased it with the blood of His own beloved Son; also very dear to the heart of Christ, He having loved the Church and given Himself for it, and so devoted Himself to it, that He will accomplish all His heart's desire concerning it, and when the moment arrives, He will present it to Himself a glorious Church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish according to His own nature (Eph. v.).

4. AS TO UNRENEWED MAN.

We find in Scripture that during the course of the ages God has tested the heart of man in various ways, proposing to him that which He will ultimately accomplish by His own power and grace. In all this man has proved his inability to answer to the thoughts of God—to say nothing of the hatred and enmity he has manifested in throwing off all the claims of God upon him.

In innocence, when created to have dominion over the works of God's hand; when made the centre of a vast system to represent God in creation, he disobeyed His voice, and brought all his posterity into ruin (Gen. i.-iii.).

When left to himself, he filled the earth with corruption and violence; and it repented the Lord that He had made man. This brought the righteous judgment of God upon man by the Flood.

When under law, man broke it, and killed the prophets that were sent to call him back to its observance.

When God came in the Person of His Son to save, man deliberately rejected and crucified Him.

But under no circumstances has man proved himself to be more incapable of profiting by God's grace and goodness than in the present dispensation of Gentile responsibility and Christianity.

In this, man is proving himself to be wise in his own conceits, and fast paving the way for the man of sin, the son of perdition, who will oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God and is worshipped, so that, he as

God will sit in the temple of God claiming to be God (2 Thess. ii.).

When I say, paving the way for the man of sin, this I recognize in the present overthrowing of the authority of God by the professing Church in calling in question the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.

This necessarily makes a way for man to exalt himself, and to reach that place of presumption which was proposed to him by Satan in the temptation in Eden: "Ye shall be as gods."

In the Antichrist this will be attained, but will only bring in the final judgment of God.

5. AS TO THE SCRIPTURES.

We find in Scripture that God has made ample provision for His people in all ages.

That He has given a minute description of the present state of the professing Church; and the course that must be adopted by those who really belong to Christ and are members of His body.

That every encouragement is held out to Christians to be faithful to Christ and His word until He comes.

That when grievous wolves have entered in, not sparing the flock; when men have arisen speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them; when evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived; when teachers have become corrupt in their minds, reprobate concerning the faith; when false teachers are found in Christian assemblies bringing in damnable heresies, denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ; when the foundations of our faith are called in question by professed servants of Christ; when those who take the place of being ministers in the Church of God criticise and set aside with contempt one book after another of the inspired writings; then it is for us who are simple believers in the Lord Jesus, to continue in the things which we have learned, and have been assured of from the beginning, knowing of whom we have learned them; and that from our childhood we have had the privilege of knowing the Holy Scriptures, which are able

to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus, knowing that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. iii.).

Thus we find the very Scriptures that some are seeking to set aside, are the Christian's resource and protection: they are given by inspiration of God, they are able to make one wise unto salvation, they are profitable, they instruct. Moreover the Christian having the Spirit of God dwelling in him, is placed in a position through the Word of God and the Holy Ghost to be entirely independent of man as a teacher.

Thus the Apostle John writes to babes in Christ, to the very youngest in the family of God, saying: "It is the last time, and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come; even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know it is the last time. . . . *But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.* I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son hath not the Father. . . . Let that therefore abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life.

"These things have I written unto you concerning them which seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of Him *abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you*; but as the same anointing teacheth you all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him" (1 John ii. 18-27.).

The Word of God and the Holy Ghost are all-sufficient for the instruction and building up of the children of God. So, while the doctors of divinity, the clergy and ministers of all grades, and those who follow them, to what part of Scripture they will, they will reject, we who are

looked upon as the laity, yet simple Christians, can go on with our business, working with our hands, seeking to serve the Lord in our every-day circumstances, with the divine assurance that "ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN BY INSPIRATION OF GOD," and that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," thus finding the Scriptures a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path : remembering the great Apostle Paul has commended such as we are "to God and the Word of His grace, which is able to build us up, and give us an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts. xx. 32).

The Word of our Lord and Master to us is, "That which ye have already hold fast till I come." (Rev. ii. 25).

A firm adherence to the positive truths of Christianity will protect any true believer to-day. These truths are found on the very surface of Scripture. We have, therefore, only to take a firm stand upon the plain statements of the Word of the living God.

6. AS TO OUR RESPONSIBILITIES.

"Hold fast"! What? "That which thou hast already." There are men who make a high profession of Christianity, but who seek to rob us of every Christian blessing!

We owe nothing to those ministers who would rob us of God's Word, and bring us into bondage, who by their pretensions come in between our souls and God; so that apart from them we must, according to their notions, be left in ignorance! Happy ignorance, truly, if shut up to God and His Word.

Let us remember that God hides His things from the wise and prudent, and reveals them unto babes. This suited the heart of Christ, who said, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Matt. xi.).

We have been redeemed by His precious blood. He has loved us and given Himself for us : we owe everything to Him for time and eternity. Does it not manifest the greatest ingratitude, when those who profess to be saved by His death ignore all His after-claims upon them?

The Church at large is in a state of such perfect indifference to the claims of Christ that He has threatened to

spue it out of His mouth! (Rev. iii. 16). He will not own it as His! But what about the individual Christian, the true believer in the Lord Jesus? He expects such an one to be faithful. He has made every provision for us to be true to Him, keep His word, and not deny His name.

We live in the closing days of the Church's history upon the earth. That which is of God will soon be removed to its destined place in the heavens. That which is of man will be judged and set aside.

In the meantime it is everything to the heart of Christ if there are a few who are really true to Him and own His claims, seeking to please Him, just acting according to His Word, and waiting to welcome Him when He comes again!

To those who are faithful He says, "I know thy works: behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my Word, and hast not denied My Name. . . Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Surely I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Rev. iii. 8-11).

Let you and me, dear fellow-Christian, stand true to Christ, hold fast to Him and His word: let us seek to be overcomers in this evil day, and stand fast in the faith. We may not have to make any advance, but just "hold fast that which we have." He is coming quickly, His approval will be everything then. We can be robbed of this. Faithfulness to Christ in answer to His love and sufferings, is everything to Him in this day of His rejection. The moment is drawing near when He will say to some, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Where are *we* as to His claims? Have we bowed unreservedly to Him as our only Lord and Master? Have we considered His having given us one or more talents to trade with for His glory, and that the answer to faithfulness to Him here will be manifested hereafter? "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne" (Rev. iii.).

“Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things” (Matt. xxv.).

But apart from any future glory or blessing, I ask, Have we considered what is really due to Him?

All the angels of God worshipped Him when He came into this world! Man afterwards spat in His face, crowned Him with thorns, and crucified Him! Yet it was love and only love that brought Him into this world. He was rich, and for our sakes became poor. He knew well what He would meet with when He came here. Yet He came, the suffering Son of God, “despised and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” But nothing could alter the love of His heart; He came here to tell out in His lowly ways of love and grace all that was in the heart of God for man, and He sealed it all with His own life’s blood, to make atonement for our sins and fit us for the holy presence of God.

The very least, then, that we can do, is to be true to Him in this world, where He is still despised and rejected.

We often sing—

“There from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flowed mingled down;
Did e’er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature ours,
That were an offering far too small;
Love that transcends our highest powers,
Demands our soul, our life, our all.”

That is true, eternally true; but alas, how little do we act according to it now! How little are we prepared to forsake all and follow Him!

Is He not degraded on every hand? Are not His Word and truth assailed? Are not His claims ignored? But where are we as to all this? Are we not looking on with perfect indifference? Do we not find that when it is a matter of standing true to Him, perhaps because the glory of His person has been called in question, or His Word has been assailed, that we just go into the background to escape a little reproach for His Name’s sake? Is not that

which characterizes the Church as a whole fast creeping into our hearts? Is not our love waxing cold, and are we not becoming lukewarm, neither hot nor cold?

I say again, beloved Christian reader, Let us manifest that we belong to Christ, that we owe our all to Him, let us take our stand upon the plain written Word of God, and hold it fast until our blessed Lord returns.

The wicked servant may say in his heart, "My Lord delayeth His coming," and the scoffer, "Where is the promise of His coming?" Yet our Lord will come! He says, "Surely I come quickly." It is for us to watch and wait for Him, to have our loins girded about, and our lights burning, and to be like men that wait for their Lord, so that we may open unto Him immediately. "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching; verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them" (Luke xii. 35-37).

He now sits on the right hand of God. All power is given to Him in heaven and earth, and every knee will have to bow to Him, and own Him Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. ii.).

He is the Root and Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will let him take the water of life freely."

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

THE END.