

said "Labour for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life"; and is it not of the greatest importance clearly to understand what this labour implies? Let the reader be assured that he must labour in that spiritual vineyard which the Lord desires to plant in his soul, in order that it may bear abundant fruits of righteousness to the glory of his heavenly father."* Thus we see again that the fundamental doctrines of Christianity *will* find their way, however men may speculatively disclaim them. Why then do we differ outwardly, when at heart we agree?

The PLYMOUTH BRETHREN, so called probably from the place where this society first arose, do not allow themselves to be a sect, though in their practices they differ considerably from those of the Established Church. They meet together on the morning of the first day of the week to celebrate the Lord's Supper, when any "Brother" is at liberty to speak for mutual edification. In the afternoon and evening, when they have preachers, the services are similar to those in the Congregational Churches (Independents):

* "Jesus the Fountain of Life and Light," p. 12.

the desk, however, for they condemn pulpits, is not occupied by one man, but used as a convenient place for speaking, being alternately occupied by the "Brother" who reads the hymn, the one who prays, and the one who teaches or preaches the Word. There are also "Meetings for Prayer," and what are technically called "reading meetings;" when a chapter is read, and those "Brethren" who have made it matter of reflection, speak upon it clause by clause for their mutual instruction.

Before a person is acknowledged a "Brother," his name is announced at one of the times of "meeting together to break bread," as it is termed, and if nothing occurs in the interval, he takes his seat with them the next Sunday.* Any one is admitted to their communion whom they believe to be "a child of God;" but they do not receive or acknowledge him as a brother, "while in actual connection with any of the various forms of worldliness," i. e. the other churches of Christ. Their preachers move about from place to place, forming different congregations, which they again leave for other places where their services are required. None of their

* In some places it is not till the end of a fortnight,

ministers receive any *stipulated* charity. The "Brethren" disapprove of any association of Christians for any purpose whatever, whether civil or religious, and therefore discountenance all Sunday School, Bible, Missionary, or even purely Benevolent, Societies. They do not disapprove of sending either Bibles or Missionaries to the heathen ; but they say that if they go at all, " God and not the church must send them." They do not think that the Gospel is to convert the world, but that it is to be "preached as a witness to" or rather against "all nations." The world, they say, "is reserved for judgment, and therefore it is wholly contrary to the character of a Christian to have any thing to do with it or its government." When a child of God is born again, "he lays," say they, "all his worldly relations down at the feet of Christ, and he is at liberty to take up none but those which he can take up in the Lord." They neither pray for pardon of sin, nor for the presence and influence of the Spirit, and carefully exclude such petitions from their hymns. Many of them think it inconsistent with the Christian character to amass wealth, or to possess furniture or clothing more than is *necessary* for health and

cleanliness; and very great sacrifices have been made by the more wealthy of them.

These are most of them unimportant peculiarities; but the great feature of this sect, for so notwithstanding their protest, I must call these "Brethren," is a degree of self approbation and uncharity for others, which, to say the least, is not what Christ taught. "No sect," says Rust,* "is more Sectarian, and none more separate from Christians of all denominations than "The Plymouth Brethren." The Church of Rome they consider "bad." The Church of England "bad." "A popish priest and a parish priest, both bad;" "but infinitely worse," says one of the Brethren (a Captain Hall), "is a people's preacher." They occasionally indulge in what they term "biting jests and sarcastic raillery," of the ministers of our church, and of those who differ from them, which evince but little of the meek and peaceable spirit of the Gospel; † for,

* Examination of the opinions of the Plymouth Brethren.

† The following is a sample from one of their published works: "The first eclogue of Virgil has always appeared to me to express most felicitously the pleasures of a *pastoral* life as we too frequently see it in these

as Lord Bacon has well observed, “to intermix Scripture with scurrility in one sentence;—the majesty of religion and the contempt and deformity of things ridiculous,—is a thing far from the reverence of a devout Christian, and hardly becoming the honest regard of a sober man.”

If I have appeared to speak harshly of this

days. With what force the following lines describe the grateful feeling of a *young clergyman*, who is recounting the benefits conferred on him by his patron :

O Melibœe, Deus nobis hæc otia fecit.
 Namque erit ille mihi semper Deus—
 Ille meas errare boves, ut cernis, et ipsum
 Ludere, quæ vellem, calamo permisit agresti.

My patron shall always be a divinity to me, for he put me into this life of ease when he gave me this *gem, the prettiest living in England*. He gave me this *easy duty*, so that I can let my flock wander wheresoever it may please them, as you see they do; while I myself do just what I like, and occasionally amuse myself with a *pianoforte* by Stoddart, that cost eighty-five guineas.”

“He (the congregational minister) is now, in his own opinion, the *ONE MAN* of the whole body of believers in all the services of the sanctuary. He utters all their sentiments of faith and doctrine, and offers up all their prayers! How can he justify the position he has assumed as an *usurper*? yea as a *grievous wolf*! in that he has swallowed up *all the gifts of the Holy Ghost* in the voracity of his selfishness,” &c. It is not thus that the “unity of the church,” which they profess to desire is likely to be cemented.

sect, it is because they seem to me to have abandoned so much of the spirit of the Gospel. "If the tenets of the Plymouth Brethren be consistent with themselves," observes Mr. Rust, "they necessarily withdraw them from all society, and every existing form of Christianity, shutting them out from all co-operation with the holy and benevolent, for the relief and blessing of their poor or sinful fellow creatures, making it sinful to fulfil the duties of a subject, a citizen, &c." But I hope and believe that these tenets must be and are counteracted by the instinctive love of our kind, which for the benefit of the world God has implanted in man. The human race is so essentially social that they who endeavour to dissociate mankind, stand in much the same situation as he would do who should hope to dam up the ocean. It is in fact to these silent tendencies of human nature, whose force we never know till we attempt to check them, that we owe much of the innocuousness of false or overstrained opinions: the reason is deluded, but the feelings which the Creator has made a part of our very being, generally correct the false argument; and the man, if not previously corrupted by vice, acts right though he argues wrong.