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# Plymouth Brethren Controversy

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- Art. VI. 1. *Christian Witness (a Quarterly Periodical)*. Rowe. Plymouth.
2. *Discipleship*. By PERCY HALL.
3. *Schismatic Tendency of Sectional Membership*.
4. *The Memorial of the Brethren in Christ*.

IT would argue little knowledge or little discretion in English Independents or Baptists, to justify their adherence to their respective communities, on the ground that these were organized and conducted according to a perfect apostolic model. Although in the heat of controversy different sects may appear to hold such language towards each other; yet we apprehend that members of the same sect, in private intercourse, are free enough to confess that this and that point would be well altered. The spirit of dogmatism in man is doubtless so strong, that he is apt to assume a tone of infallibility, even when contending against such assumptions: yet we believe that considerate and moderate men are to be found in all sects, and eminently, we would hope, among those who acknowledge no authority but that of Christ and his apostles; men, who would willingly listen to complaints of defect or error in their own church government, especially if accompanied with practical suggestions for avoiding them.

One point has been often commented on, from the days of Dr. Owen to the present time, in which the congregational churches of England differ from those of the primitive ages. The churches of the first and second centuries had *many elders* in each. The bishop was not then an isolated minister, but *primus inter pares*, distinguished among his coadjutors by age, by gifts, or by long acquaintance with the flock. Before the power of the bishop, as a separate order, was established; before the influx of wealth had made his office coveted for the patronage or luxury connected with it; before political and judicial authority had been vested in him, this arrangement had many advantages. The plurality of presbyters guarded considerably against the undue influence of a single mind, and the contraction of intellect which a church suffers when it is long dependent on the instruction of a single teacher. But as it is obviously impossible for such a body of teachers to work together in harmony, without a President or Chairman, the very necessity of the case will presently confer on one of the presbyters a certain priority of honour to the rest, in which consisted primitive Episcopacy.

{572} The organization of modern dissenting churches, having rarely even a pretence of similarity in this respect to the churches of the first century, it is not wonderful that those who are honestly desirous of following the *highest* antiquity, should from time to time utter loud remonstrances against our present degenerate condition. Aud {sic} if it be accompanied with friendly suggestions of amelioration, we desire to receive them most cordially. Such we believe to be the intention of Mr. R. M. Beverley, in his "Letters to the Rev. John A. James," although (like a valuable watch dog), his bark is rather too sharp to please our nerves. Such, we are sorry to say, is *not* the intention of another class of brethren, who are loud in declamation against "*the one-man system*." Delenda est Carthago, is the motto carried on their banner. They avowedly rejoice in every thing which tends to the destruction of existing churches; and would utterly refuse to help in improving them.

Before proceeding to a closer examination of their doctrines, let us dwell a little on the deviation from antiquity, to which, on the part of congregational churches, we have pleaded guilty. The first question that offers itself is, whether the total number of teachers compared with the number of professing members in the congregational churches of England, is less than in the churches of the first two centuries. We do not pretend to be able

to give an accurate answer, but we think there is such a measure of probability in the belief that teachers are comparatively as numerous in the congregational churches now, as they were in the earliest times, as that the burden of proof lies with him who denies it. Suppose that the church of Antioch had twenty presbyters; perhaps at the same time there were at least 10,000 members. In short, it was only the large churches, formed in the capital cities, which had numerous presbyters: nor have we ever seen evidence to make it credible that there was ordinarily more than one teacher to two or three hundred persons. If then it be admitted that we are not comparatively deficient in the *number* of teachers, the remedy for our present defect (admitting it to be such), is not so obviously to be sought where Mr. Beverley would seek it, in multiplying three or four fold the ministers in each congregation. If indeed this be possible, we do not say that it should not be done. But he himself is convinced that adequate pecuniary support for the increased number is unattainable: hence the new teachers will be only lay elders, capable of giving but fractions of their time to the immediate service of the ministry.

But unless we mistake, our difference from the ancient churches lies in another point. The "attraction of cohesion," between the individuals who formed a church was far stronger in early than in modern times. Their numbers might multiply from one hundred to a thousand, and from this to five, eight, ten thousand and upwards, without its occurring to them to separate into several churches. With us, the weight of the mass breaks the ball into pieces, long before such dimensions can be attained. If all the congregationalists in London, Birmingham, or Bristol, were to cohere as in ancient days, they might have as fine a show of presbyters as had Rome and Alexandria. How much more so, if all the professors of Religion of every class and sect were so united into a single church? This then is the immediate and proximate cause of our having apparently fewer teachers in our churches.

Now if any one allege that herein consists our sin, that we are so ready to separate from one another, he will state a great truth; yet a truth which may easily be so used as to inculcate error and injustice. Indeed there is some weight in the defence, that the Scripture has not defined at what crisis the unwieldiness of a church is a reason for dividing it into several; and that such unwieldiness rarely can have arisen in apostolic times. Yet it is certain that Ephesus in Paul's day was large enough to need and to support many elders or overseers; and we are not therefore disposed to excuse ourselves, as though there were no scriptural precedent against us. More to the purpose might it be to say, that experience has shown the mischief of these powerful organizations; that the rapid growth of episcopal power in the second century, while the civil magistrate was still hostile, and the church comparatively uncorrupt, may serve to warn us not to desire to imitate the earliest churches so closely in a matter which turned out so hurtful to them; or at least, not to grieve very much if exactly that state of things is now unattainable.

Yet we cannot deny that it is a shame and a scandal to all churches, of every name and sect, when they part in anger or disgust; or when, having parted, they cease to regard one another as constituting one body; and will not receive one another as those ought to do, who have parted merely from mutual convenience. Now at first sight it may appear that the ancient churches vastly excelled us in love and in Christian submissiveness; and we are too sensible of the deep want of these qualities in modern times, to desire for one moment to comfort either ourselves or others by depreciating the ancients. Yet if our relative positions are to be understood, there are certain circumstances that must not be omitted. Of the apostolic churches none, that we know, formed actual secessions; but they were not therefore without schisms. Having, probably, no vast room that would contain all, the entire body seldom endeavoured to assemble; but meetings would be held in vari-

ous private houses, where more or fewer of the church would come. At Corinth we know that particular preachers were run after, and schisms resulted, exactly as in modern days. But when the first excitement was past, and the clerical order was fairly established, a far greater uniformity of doctrine must have obtained among teachers than can exist now; and it was not long {574} before the mass of the ignorant laity began to imbibe the belief, that whatever the teachers asserted to come of apostolic tradition, must be quietly received by them. We feel it hard to eulogize this as humility or Christian submissiveness. But how opposite is our case. We came out of the bog of Rome, with mire sticking all over us; and before men could get clear, and the new position be well understood, a few of the foremost laid hold of the theology of Augustine, and persuaded the civil power in every country to enforce this as the only true creed of Protestants. Thenceforward the Calvinistic controversy unceasingly embroiled the churches; (a controversy altogether unknown to the first four centuries;) and the differences of doctrine between teachers became too considerable to allow men to treat it as immaterial to which of several they would habitually listen. The most common cause which leads churches to divide into two, rather than cohere and grow as one, is found in the preference of preachers: and how is this difficulty to be fought against by pressing all the churches into one?

We do not say that this is a *right* state of things. We feel it bad, painful, humbling. But we must represent, that the case is not that of Congregationalism, but of Protestantism. The agreement on these points is *less* (for instance) among ministers of the church of England, than among congregationalists. We believe that pious members of the church of England would fret as much as any dissenters, to be constrained to attend any other ministers of that church than those whose doctrine they approve. In short then, those who desire to blend all the dissenters of each city into one church (without which we *cannot* imitate the ancients, and must needs go on in the “one-man system”), must show us how it is to be effected suddenly, at any other expense than by individuals renouncing their private judgments, and thus reestablishing Popery. For ourselves, we believe *it ought to be aimed at*; but that the time is not generally ripe for it, and that to constrain the form of union before the substance is attained, would embitter the quarrel, and make the rent worse. Perhaps the Lord does not grant to any division of his church the blessing of full unanimity, until all the branches of it learn to lay aside their enmities: and as regards sin in this matter, we dare not throw a stone at any other church, except at those, which by a claim of universal exclusive dominion, carry schism and implacable war on their front.

Among these we are very sorry to reckon the recently arisen body of Christians, whose head quarters is Plymouth, and who have taken to themselves the title of *The Brethren*. Most sincerely can we profess that we have watched the rise and progress of their views, not only without prejudice, but with deep and anxious interest. We saw so much to admire in the spirit of the men, so many points of neglected truth prominent in their minds, that it was long before we gave up the hope that they would ex- {575} hibit to England a pattern of a “more excellent way” than she has yet seen. It is not any error in bare opinions of which we complain – errors equally great we may ourselves hold un-awares: and many of their opinions appear to us to involve valuable truth. It is the exclusive dogmatic spirit, the scornful, supercilious tone, the absolute refusal to cooperate on neutral ground, the zeal for proselyting persons – not to Christ, but to a new system, which they ridiculously pretend is *not* a system; the carelessness what spiritual ties they burst while pressing their theories; we must add, the false principles of reasoning and judgment, set up for idolatry; their contempt of all who contest their modes of thinking; their unwise scoffs against learning and education; their opposition to every effort to educate men’s minds or benefit their civil condition; – these are the things which have con-

vinced us to our sorrow, that they are likely to be chiefly signal as firebrands in the Christian world, and supporters of all political oppression.

There is an *apparent* difficulty in learning what their tenets are; for they forbid us to count the *Christian Witness* their organ (protesting against this on the wrapper); they refuse to set forth any Creed or Form of Church Government; they pretend to act as individuals, and that their Church, *as such*, holds no notions. We shall however persist in calling the *Christian Witness* their organ, as long as we see it strictly confined to the advocacy of their peculiar sentiments. No one can study their numerous tracts, great and small, much less hear their preachings, their expositions of Scripture, their conversations, their prayers, without perceiving an entire and peculiar system of doctrine and thought pervading the whole. We do not, therefore, feel on uncertain ground, in endeavouring to *consolidate* their tenets: and though it is highly possible that many individuals of their body, who have but partially imbibed or understood the system, will shrink from naked statements, which, when clothed in their peculiar phraseology, they habitually admire; we yet feel satisfied that the following will, as a whole, substantially and faithfully convey the doctrines inculcated among them.

Their fundamental tenet is the same as that of the Quakers; viz., that the energies of the Holy Spirit are still given to the Church in so emphatic and peculiar a mode, as to make all Church arrangements for edification unlawful. They do not attack bad organization, but organization as such. They hold that no edification can be expected by a Church, which is “chaining the Spirit” by a fixed ministry; and they assign this as an adequate ground, why all dissenters should break away from their existing connections. No blessing is to be had “except in God’s own way,” that is, except in a church where no regulation is made that one brother more than another should address the body. It ought to be left to the moving of the Spirit on the heart of the individual at the moment. {576} So likewise a written Liturgy is unlawful, chiefly because it dictates to the Spirit.

A church may have, perhaps ought to have, a fixed pastor or pastors, not to teach, but to look after the conduct of the members, attend to the poor and sick, and make all arrangements of convenience; we believe, also, all of a pecuniary nature. It may likewise permit an individual to give notice, that he will preach the gospel at such a time and in such a place “to the world;” meaning thereby any body who comes; and who are counted as the world, even though nine tenths happen to be true believers. But if they assemble *as* believers, this is no longer lawful. The Spirit must then be left free.

Nor is it fit that the church recognize any individual as a Teacher by a public act. The Spirit makes a man a Teacher, and the individuals of the church in their *private* capacity are bound to recognize it; to listen to him, and obey the Spirit in him: but no one ought to be *officially* a Teacher, so as to have a time allotted for him, and him exclusively, to address the church.

The church ought to meet, “as a church,” at least every Sunday; and every time that it meets, it ought to break bread in remembrance of the Lord.

It is not lawful to educate any one as a minister of religion, however undoubted his piety, however great his desire to become apt to teach. Such aptitude is to be gained, not by the natural exercises of the mind in Philology, in History, in Science, in Literature and Criticism, but by prayer, meditation, and study of the Bible alone, without note or comment.

If any one have *already* acquired a knowledge of literature, it is lawful to employ it in the service of Christ: but those who have not acquired it, must not seek for it. (Nearly as lawyers say of some things: *Fieri non debuit: factum valet.*)

The law of Moses is not our rule of life in any sense whatever. The law of Christ alone is our sufficient rule. Accordingly,\* the observance of the Sabbath or Seventh Day is binding upon no Christian. The observance of the First Day is highly expedient, and by all means to be continued. Yet it does not rest on any recorded divine command, and much less is to be regulated by the law of the fourth Commandment.

It is not lawful to have private pews, any more than a private pulpit: and whenever the pulpit can be dispensed with, it should be removed, because (like clerical dresses) it is too much an emblem of office.

{577} Preaching is only to the world: but teaching is to the church.

The twelfth and fourteenth chapters of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, contain the law of Christ for our public assembling.

Not all the spiritual gifts spoken of in that Epistle have departed from the church. The gift of "ruling," and "discernment of spirits," the "Word of Wisdom," the "Word of Knowledge," (if not that of Prophecy), still remain to us.

It is not lawful to take the opinion of the church on any spiritual subject, by asking the votes of individuals. "To put sin to the vote," is an offence to God.

It is not lawful to put down names, in promise of definite contributions to Teachers or Church-officers. If these last are living by faith, they will not desire it.

All *Rule* is in the few, because the Spirit is eminently in the few.

For a church to choose its ministers, is unscriptural presumption. Democracy in the Church, or in the World is alike of Satan.

When a minister sent by God comes, the church is bound to receive him.

Those who are *wise* in the church, will have a discernment of Spirits granted them, to judge in this matter: for "he who is spiritual judgeth all things."

To *separate from evil* is our first duty. "Cease to do evil: learn to do well." It is incumbent on every one instantly to leave a church in which the Spirit is chained by a fixed ministry; even though he have no prospect but that of absolute isolation. It is the way of faith. Let each act thus, and in a short time God will raise up from them a church in which he can indeed take pleasure; *perhaps*, one in which he will bestow gifts of prophecy, healing, and tongues.

Every person claiming admission into a church must be received, if he is a partaker of the Spirit, be his opinions what they may. Wisdom will be given to "the few," to judge of his character; but the sense of the church must by no means be taken. The church being always formed chiefly of babes and ignorant persons, must never vote "by the head" on such a matter.

It is unlawful to lay down any Creed, as a test of communion, or as a test for ministers. Nay, it is presumptuous to distinguish truths into fundamental and non-fundamental; and amounts to a slight on God's word, all parts of which are equally sacred.

The wise and eminently spiritual may detect that a person is *not* partaker of the Spirit, by some deficiency in the articles of his creed, even though (judging by moral tests alone), they would have mistaken him for a brother in Christ.

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\* As we believe "the Brethren" are unanimous on this subject, it seemed right not to omit it. Yet it is no peculiarity of theirs; since it was held by all the Reformers, as well as in all times by the most learned writers of the Church of England.



“To agree to differ,” is a base and carnal policy, a\* compromise with sin! for all differences of judgment flow out of sin.

{578} The Creeds and decisions of the Catholic Church (so called), however early in time, are deserving of no respect and no attention. The study of Church History is rather injurious, as biasing the mind unduly in the perusal of Scripture, and leading us to rest on the opinions of fallible men.

It is a profanity and grievous presumption, to criticise the historical evidence of the genuineness and integrity of the Canon of Scripture, as by law set forth in the Church of England. To impeach the inspired authority of any book recognized by that church, would prove a man to be destitute of the Spirit, and deserving of excommunication.

It is unlawful\* to appeal to Various Readings of manuscripts, against those followed by King James’s translators: for this would unsettle every thing.

To criticise and amend the translation is unlawful; but it must be done by the Spirit, and not by the laws of common Greek and Hebrew.

In the interpretation of prophecy, the *literal* meaning is alone admissible. To fritter away the doctrine of the millennium, of Christ’s personal coming, and of the restoration of the Jews with their ceremonial law, by appeals to Oriental metaphor and spiritual meanings, is little better than infidelity.

The whole of the Mosaic Law is typical. None of the precepts are medical, nor political, nor given in concession to existing custom, nor with a view to keep the Jews distinct from other nations, but they are all types of Christ and of the gospel. To explain the law of leprosy as a regulation of quarantine, or to illustrate the avenger of blood from Arab customs, indicates a mind utterly dark to things spiritual.

“Heresy” consists, not in making a Party, nor yet in holding or teaching a Fundamental error, but (as† the etymology indicates) in “choosing for oneself:” that is, in adopting an interpretation or opinion not according to the mind of the Spirit. Thus, an Anti-millennarian is a Heretic: or again, one who holds the Apocalypse to be spurious is a Heretic.

Heresy deserves excommunication, because it is “a work of the flesh.” – (Gal. v. 20.)

{579} If any brother in his public teaching, utter that which is false or unedifying {sic}, those who are wise must reprove him; and he must submit to them. For we are ordered to be ‘subject one to another.’ And if he do not submit, they must reject him as a heretic after a first and second admonition.

All the precepts of our Lord must be understood literally, without any reasonings about their Hebrew idiom. A man who explains: ‘Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven;’ to mean, ‘Be less anxious to lay up treasures on earth, than to lay up treasures in heaven:’ shows a determination to dictate what our Lord *ought* to have spoken, instead of reverentially receiving what he *has* spoken. In all similar cases, it is the way of Faith to believe and obey to the letter, however absurd such conduct might seem to Sense.

\* This sentiment may so often be heard among them, that we feel justified {578} in putting this down as one of their tenets. Yet assuredly they *do* “agree to differ” on Infant Baptism, and are particularly severe on the churches that will not. We do not know how to reconcile this.

\* This is certainly maintained by leading men among them; yet it is difficult to think it can be generally and soberly avowed.

† We would not wish any of our readers to receive this as a fact. The word Heresy means, first, a Philosophical Tenet or System; and secondly, a Sect or Party; as it is generally, and should always be, rendered in the New Testament. A “Heretic” means a Partisan.



‘Owe no man any thing,’ is an apostolic injunction: it is, therefore, unlawful to borrow money.

To receive interest from monies in the public funds is lawful; but it is more according to the mind of Christ to spend the capital; than, to keep it and devote the interest to his service.

Inferiors in rank ought to be willing to acknowledge superiority of rank in other Christians; but the superiors should never recognize it in themselves.

In giving and distributing to the indigent, we must listen to the simple commands of Christ, and not modify them by any considerations of expediency and political economy.

To attend a political meeting, or to become member of a society in which men unite, not as Christians, but as citizens, for gaining any worldly object (as the emancipation of slaves, the protection of Aborigines, the providing for the poor, the reforming of criminals); is to become one of the world, and is inconsistent with our duty to Christ.

By becoming citizens of the New Jerusalem, we cease to be citizens of this world, and ought not to claim the rights of worldly citizenship. Paul showed great want of faith in doing so. As a punishment for his wilful return to Jerusalem, when the Holy Spirit forbade him; he seems to have been left under a cloud, and finally sent to prison by Felix and Festus for two years, until he had come to himself.

No Christian ought to submit to bear sway in this world; for all the powers of this world are apostate from God, and in reality appointed by and under control of the devil.

When it is said, that kings and governors are an ordinance of God, this is to be understood of his Providence, not of his Grace. He ‘ordains’ them, as he ordains banditti, earthquake, and pestilence.

Every part of the life of Christ is a pattern for the imitation of the believer. To pretend that he is our pattern in his common {580} character, but not in his ministerial character, is an invention of carnal reason, to enable men to pick and choose how far they will follow him. No such distinction can hold; for every Christian bears a ministerial character towards God.

No believer should enter into any union or society for any purposes whatsoever, except a union in which the Spirit governs unconstrainedly. To be a member of a Missionary Society is unlawful, unless the society be modelled as a Church ought to be.

We ought not to desire to retain and transmit to our children, that political liberty which we enjoy; or if we do desire it, the desire should be buried in our bosoms, and displayed neither by word nor deed.

We ought not to busy ourselves with promoting the temporal good of others by mending worldly systems. Slaves, we may be satisfied to leave slaves for ever. *The world is too bad to be mended by regulations.* We should do good *in detail* by preaching the gospel, feeding the hungry, and tending the sick; but we ought to feel supreme indifference concerning Acts of Parliament. A philanthropist can scarcely be a Christian.

Whatever the Scriptures say concerning the world as it was, must be understood concerning the world as it is. No allowance must be made for change of circumstances: for this would turn the Bible into an obsolete book, and make it a trap for the poor and simple.

In expounding prophecy, we must first settle the meaning (according to the wisdom given us), and not till afterwards, search into history for its fulfilment. Yet history is of very minor importance; were it otherwise, the prophecies would be useless to the poor.

No part of the Apocalypse is yet fulfilled. When the time comes, it will be nearly all run through in the course of three natural years and a half. Babylon does not mean Rome, but means some worldly system of which certainly Dissenters and Radicals are a part.

The Psalms are all to be understood spiritually, of Christ and Antichrist, and of Israel restored, or about to be restored, to his own land.

The Proverbs are generally to be explained spiritually, as is all the narrative portion of the Old Testament, though not to the exclusion of its literal sense. Thus in the Proverbs, a virtuous woman means a good church, a scolding woman and strange woman mean churches as political as those of modern Dissenters, and as foreign to Christ as Establishments. Wine means doctrine; Wisdom means Christ.

In the prophets, Babylon, Egypt, Tyrus, Idumea, &c., must by no means be explained of the ancient nations so called. Mr. Keith has done a great disservice to the cause of Christ in so un- {581} derstanding them; for it is easy to see that many of the things alleged were not really fulfilled; as the putting out of the sun and moon, the reeling and vanishing of the earth, &c. To attempt to spiritualize away these expressions is infidelity. Faith would at once see, that the names Babylon, &c., must have a spiritual interpretation.\*

We think we have written enough, and more than enough, in detail. It will be seen that the Brethren agree with the Quakers in many points, but not in that point for which these have commanded the veneration of all sects and all men; their untiring zeal for liberty of person and of conscience, their noble union of gentleness and moral power with a bold demand of 'that which is just and equal' for all their species. Alas, on the contrary, the Brethren refuse to employ the moral influence even of their names and personal presence, to gain any blessing for their fellow men, except within the pale of their own church. Condemning war unreservedly and universally, it would be against their conscience to become members even of a Peace Society!

It would be doing ourselves an injustice to let it be supposed, that we have the slightest hostility to them. We are most fully convinced, that a very large proportion of them are not only amiable and respectable as individuals, but devotedly pious, and anxious to do that of which they talk so much, – to be subject to the Spirit in all things. But it is certainly possible that the leading spirits among them, with much that is praiseworthy, may have too large a leaven of self-will and love of rule, and no one can study their principles without seeing how heavy a yoke of spiritual despotism these prepare. Their aversion to 'church tribunals' seems nearly as intense as that of Charles the First to Parliaments; and we fear for a like reason.

(1) Now this is the first point in the *spirit* of their system to which we must call attention. As the Apostolicals and the Irving- {582} ites, so have the 'Brethren' a system of spiritual despotism, founded on an assumption of the exclusive possession of the Spirit. Their explanation of 'heresy,' undermines all Christian liberty whatsoever, and could the rule be carried generally into effect, must split the church into as many parts as it contained independent minds. A little knowledge of human nature might enable one to predict how it would work. A majority love to have some other mind to lean on; and the more decided

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\* We think it safer to abstain from any farther notice of their prophetic views, both because we should be too voluminous, and because of the difficulty of understanding their endless refinements. Much turns on 'the Dispensations;' a subject harped upon ad nauseam; and most unintelligibly. The Levitical law, because so dark, is another favorite portion with them. Every page, indeed, of Scripture, as they represent it, appears full of enigmas and conceits. Deep mysteries and valuable truths are hidden in grammatical and verbal changes. Thus 'the Son of the Father' means something very different from 'the Son of God:' and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (iv. 3.) had a *moral reason* for saying καταβολῆς κόσμου, (foundation of world), instead of τῆς καταβολῆς τοῦ κόσμου (the foundation of the world). We might fill pages with frivolities of this nature; a natural result of the mystical fancy, that the literary composition of the Scripture was governed by a sort of divine grammar, which it is unlawful to explain as we explain the idioms of common writers.

and dogmatic is the teacher, the better they like it. Of the teachers themselves, we may calculate that some will be modest and cautious by nature, and either will choose a path so peculiar as never to clash, or will be kept down by the ascendancy of rougher minds. One or two, like the strongest buffaloes of a herd, will force their way in front, trampling a path through the thicket by which the weaker ones gladly follow. A close oligarchy is the result; for a sense of expediency and self-preservation exerts vast power in preventing 'the few' from quarrelling among themselves. But if any new comer, using the liberty of the 'Brethren,' ventures to advance any thing contrary to that which they have ruled to be the voice of the Spirit, he is ordered to submit to 'his brethren' (for 'we should be subject to one another'), and this means, not that he is allowed to appeal to the opinions of the Christian church at large; but to some half dozen individuals of themselves, who are, under God, the standard of right and wrong. 'All the saints are thus minded:' 'We have the mind of Christ:' 'The anointing which abideth in us teacheth us all things:' 'He which is spiritual judgeth all things:' these sentiments are repeated and echoed, until it is forgotten that there *are* saints opposed to their opinions.

When it is noted, that like the Irvingites and the Apostolicals, without being ostensibly politicians, they have a strong sympathy with ultra toryism, not a little quickened by recent reforms; the suspicion will enter, that a hatred of popular liberty bore no small share in the formation of their system. Both the Irvingites and the Plymouth church appear to us to have been set up as 'refuges for the aristocratic;' asylums to receive those who are driven out of the Church of England by her corruptions, but who cannot endure the 'democracy' inherent in the Voluntary system. Clergymen who leave the Establishment are certainly in a piteous condition. They have been used to dictate to their congregations; and so long as they could satisfy their consciences about the fixed subscriptions, needed to consult no man what, or how dogmatically, they should teach. But if any of them become pastor to a ready-formed Dissenting church, he finds the people pre-occupied with principles and customs new to him, and which he feels as a fresh yoke upon him, just at the moment he has taken a step with vast effort, that was to free him from all yoke. He is inexperienced in the practical difficulties of carrying on a church, when its chief {583} man is not backed up by the law of the land. The phraseology of Dissenters (for all parties and sects have their dialect) offends his taste, and perhaps the democratic *form* of the church clashes with his prejudices. Moreover (as the Plymouth Brethren), he often regards the mode of proceeding which has become habitual, as therefore evil, because it is *a system*. They are quite unconscious, while summoning all Christians 'to leave their own systems,' that they have formed a new system of their own. 'We have no system; we have no creed;' is their constant profession: yet let any one refuse to submit to some of their arrangements, or oppose some of their peculiar doctrines, and it at once appears that there is nothing practical in such liberalism or liberality. All this is, we repeat, quite natural, both to the clergy, and to the aristocracy, when they become Dissenters; and we make much allowance for their desire, rather to form a new church than to enter one already existing. But this will in no respect justify them in molesting the peace of other churches, and destroying Christian love, by exclusive pretensions.

So anxious are they to separate their cause from that of all *common* Dissenters, and to propitiate the aristocracy by representing this, that they reject the term 'Dissenter' when applied to themselves, as offensive. 'We dissent from Dissenters,' say they: so that the greatest Dissenter in the kingdom (who denies that any community in it except his own sect, is a Church of Christ at all), is not to be called a Dissenter! This is as curious as Mr. Irving's alleging that no one in England had a right to dissent from the Church as by law Established, except himself, and those who joined him: for what he did in the Spirit, oth-

ers must not imitate in the flesh. With equal strangeness, do the 'Brethren,' who have left the Establishment for conscience' sake, inveigh against private judgment, as a 'denial of the Spirit.' And while they voluntarily spend their energies or fortunes in the cause of Christ and their opinions, and repudiate all payment for chapel-pews as an intolerable taxation; they will not endure to be called 'Upholders of the Voluntary System.' Is it because the sound would offend aristocratic ears?

(2) A second feature that painfully characterizes them is, extreme despondency and gloominess of anticipations, greatly rising out of unreasonable discontent that not all men will agree with them. Keenly alive to discern the evil that is in the Christian world, they are singularly insensible to the good. To judge by their descriptions, never was religion in so deplorable a state in these kingdoms, since the Reformation. Every thing is too bad to be mended. The Churches are all bad: the Bible Society is bad: the Missionary Societies are bad: the Government is bad: the mob is bad: the old High Church is bad: the Evangelicals are bad: the Political Protestants are bad: the Universities are {584} bad: the Apostolicals are bad: the Whigs and Radicals are bad. The Establishment cannot be mended, the Dissenting churches cannot be improved. To come out and be separate is the sole remedy. They mourn that a nation should profess Christianity (for it is to unite the world and Christ), they mourn that it should profess infidelity: they mourn that (like America) it should profess nothing at all.

Again and again is it proclaimed by them, that *all the Churches are apostate*. This does not mean, that all the *individuals* are apostate. Far be it. But strange to say, they hold that each individual of a church may be an accepted worshipper of God, and yet the church *as a whole* (we suppose, 'its system'), may be apostate. We confess, we cannot get to the bottom of this: it is as though one were to say, that a Province is in rebellion, but all the inhabitants are loyal. One thing is clear; that nothing will stop the heavy complaints of the Brethren, but an instantaneous millennium. According to a dogma which is constantly in their mouths: 'God never does patchwork.' He never renews into its primitive glory that which man has once corrupted: but he pulls down entirely, and builds something different. Consequently the Church cannot hope to regain her lost glory *in this Dispensation*: but we must anxiously look for a New Dispensation, by a new miraculous interference of Christ in his glory.

Now, far be it from us to undervalue the tenderness of conscience which detects and shrinks from evils, in whatever quarter it appear; or that zeal for God, which ever cries out that His kingdom may come! We could echo most of their complaints against human sin; but we believe that it does no man good to dwell on this; it rather sinks us into inactivity, than quickens us with hope; nay, the tendency of it is to censoriousness and misanthropy. Desperate as was the state of the heathen and Jewish world, we do not see the apostle wasting his energies in lamentation or melancholy; but he looks ever to the bright side of the picture; he 'endures all things for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.' No finite mind can bear the weight of a sinful world, and it seems not wise for a finite mind to meddle with that sorrow. At the same time, we must protest that it is an assumption quite ungrounded, that this generation is worse than those which preceded.\* We believe that every well {585} informed mind, will bless the Author of all good, natural and spiritual, that the past century has

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\* This is a question, the decision of which depends upon *historical information*. But 'the Brethren' treat it as though it were a doctrine of the Bible, and regard it as a mark of worldliness and carnal self-complacency, to hold the contrary. Indeed, they so slight historical inquiry, (as a 'mere worldly study') that one would suppose they believed that they received their decisions on such matters by a special revelation.

been one of great improvement; and it may be hard to conjecture what, except the growing power of popular sentiment, has conjured up in their minds notions so dismal. – Likewise, to assume, (as they do assume,) that we must separate from every society which in any respect acts as we think it should not, is alike monstrous and pernicious. It seems, we are to leave a Missionary Society, because some of its Auxiliaries have elected patrons, or passed complimentary resolutions, such as we disapprove; we are to leave one church, because it examines into the ‘experience’ of candidates; another, because it admits all upon a mere profession of faith; another, because it has many members whom we think to be unspiritual. We have no room to reason against that which, our readers will probably think, refutes itself.

But as we said, this is also connected with their unreasonable hankering after absolute unanimity. Here, unawares, they bring us back to the doctrines of the apostolics, which sets much value on uniformity and mechanical agreement. Disagreement they urge, is the fruit of the flesh, and indicates how low we are in the Spirit; it is in itself a sin. To compromise with sin is sinful. ‘To agree to differ,’ is an odious policy, pursued indeed by common dissenters, but specially insulting to the Spirit. What else can this practically mean, than that it is our duty to be always restless, and always on the attack, until unanimity and uniformity are attained? But how shallow is that philosophy or that religion which *desires* uniformity in this world! It could not be attained without sacrificing all individuality of character, all peculiarity of education and experience. This world is a scene for the formation of mind, and in our progress towards perfect truth, there must needs be considerable difference of judgment. Such imperfections call forth many virtues which otherwise would have had no exercise. This is in entire consistency with the whole scheme of this world, and with the existence of physical evil. Moreover, God values *minds* and *hearts* more than the propositions or the systems which our minds contemplate; and for the due discipline and cultivation of the former, many a false step must ordinarily be made and discovered. Power must be gained by fatigues and by failures; humility must be taught by the consciousness of error; the feebleness, too, of the human judgment must be displayed by permanent and irreconcilable differences. Are we to break our hearts about this? But we are told, it is a mark of imperfection, a stain of sin; a scandal to the church! Happy is that family which can weep at the death of a sparrow; happy the people (may we add?) which can repent and confess their sin, that some of them are Presbyterians, and some Congregationalists. We are living in the {586} midst of grand realities; it is a question of the world or Christ, irreligion or religion, death or life. We have no tears to spare for the absence or presence of a pulpit; for pews or no pews; nor for numerous doctrinal questions of far greater importance. It is practically impossible to make much of secondary matters, without making less of what is vital. If we are too busy in straining out gnats, we shall presently swallow a camel. If we sigh and groan that not all Christians admit of ‘open ministry,’ our hearts will become hard, on occasions really calling for sorrow. For ourselves, the longer we live, the more desperate do we become of any greater agreement between sincere Christians, than is contained in the barest fundamentals of the gospel; and to attain even this, *joined with mutual forbearance* appears to us a thing most arduous, as most valuable. On the other hand, we regard it as an axiom, that this mutual tolerance is, humanly speaking, an essential prerequisite towards any increase of agreement.

(3.) A third most unhappy result of their principles, is in the absolute isolation of themselves from all other Christians. They say that they are excluded from all Dissenting churches by the act of the other party, who, by having fixed teachers, and fixed times for them to teach, grieve and quench the Spirit. Well, it is to be lamented. But do they forget, that others have an equal difficulty in bearing with the Plymouth views and practices? It



only proves the desperate nature of the attempt after uniformity. But there are various other ways in which goodwill is manifested, and confidence circulates among the members of Christ's body. In the last forty years, the rise of religious societies in which the members of many churches and sects can unite, has afforded a valuable opportunity of diffusing mutual esteem and respect, and manifesting mutual regard. Benevolent societies of various kinds have a like tendency: and a very few hours in the course of a year thus spent, may do much to counteract the prejudices fostered by only acting with those of our own sect. Farther, to advert to a point much pressed by the brethren: the importance that our unity should be *visible*, if it is to affect the world. The profane world is not so stupid as to suppose religious men to be at enmity, because they belong to different sects; unless they see those sects refuse to combine on neutral ground, (pretending that nothing is neutral,) and seeking proselytes the one from the other. If such symptoms of hostility and rivalry are visible, doubtless the world is likely to think there is no Christian love among us; perhaps with too much cause. But if there is a cordial union at bottom, which displays itself in joint labor in *some* religious objects, and naturally gives rise to the public interchange of friendly sentiment, this, (if anything) will convince the world that we have a real unity, though {587} no uniformity. The Brethren will no doubt reply, that all this talk is useless, for they have no choice; it is against their conscience and their principles to have to do with any religious or benevolent society. We know it is; but we ask, Ought not this to be a positive demonstration, that their conscience is ill-instructed, their principles wrong? Are they not hereby convicted as apostles of schism?

It must here be noticed, that they are now become a *sect*, even after their own definition of it. Once they used to assign as a reason why they would not join any body of Dissenters, – ‘because they are all sects,’ a prejudice imbibed within the church that calls itself National. In proof of the assertion, they used to appeal to the fact, that wherever a Baptist goes, he may sit down with the Baptists, but with none others; and wherever a Methodist goes, he joins the Methodists, and so on. Hence a Baptist or a Methodist, is not a member of Christ's church, but only of his own sect. We allow that if these ties can be considerably loosened, without opposite and greater evil, it is to be much desired. But now, how stands the matter? The Brethren have formed colonies at Exeter, Hereford, Worcester, Cirencester, London, and many other places; so that a brother in his travels to these cities, is welcomed within the bosom of his own community;\* though indeed, if not, he would not join any other church. We ask, therefore, whether the Brethren are not become a sect, quite as truly as are all dissenting bodies? It is perhaps, time for one of themselves to proclaim their degeneracy; and (since “patching an apostate system” is hopeless) erect the standard for a new succession.†

(4.) But we must yet devote some remarks to their doctrines concerning the interpretation of Scripture, on which so very much practically depends. Their inconsistency on this head is so flagrant, that we cannot tell to what to impute it, but to the same spirit of despotism on which animadversion has been made. Their leading men have been edu-

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\* Mr. Percy F. Hall, in his letter to Mr. Venn's hearers, (p. 17) disowns all peculiar connection with the different churches of the sect. ‘I know,’ adds he, ‘no such mistaken title, as *one of the Brethren*, but that of *Christian* only.’ Is this fair or candid, when he refuses to hold communion with all other bodies, and holds communion with these bodies everywhere? And wherein is the title ‘Christian’ less assuming than the title ‘Brother?’

† This has actually taken place at Exeter, but not on any formidable scale. The complaint of the seceders, we believe was, that the rest domineered over them, and tried to quash by a tone of authority their too Calvinistic doctrine. The brethren at head-quarters hold but a very moderate Calvinism.



cated at the Universities, and though not learned, are not unacquainted with literature. The pages of the Christian Witness show how little disposed they are to acquiesce in the received translation of the Scriptures, or to renounce the advantages of an acquaintance with the original languages. A philosophical tone is occasionally assumed, as of one who is generalizing from an extensive knowledge of history; and we are safe in saying, that the writers would be sorry not to be thought men of information and sound acquirements. Yet having attained a certain amount of learning, and a certain exercise of mind in the acquirement, (be it what it may,) they are anxious to make a present of ignorance to all beside. That any one who is, or who is preparing to become a religious teacher, should meddle with Latin and Greek, is treated by them with grave rebuke or bitter raillery; to Dissenting Academies they cannot allude without an ecstasy of scorn. To judge by their practice, Greek, Hebrew, and History, are all valuable in the interpretation of Scripture: but if we believe their theory, a man is besotted with worldliness and ‘common dissent,’ who supposes these things of the slightest value. Certainly, the fewer there are in their church who can compete with the leading men in knowledge and in power of mind, the more docile the flocks are likely to be; but this is a carnal policy which Christ cannot bless. On the other hand, it is impossible to suppose, that those who so eagerly employ every scrap of literature which they acquired in past days, can sincerely hold the ignorant notion, that *all* the difficulties attending the interpretation of the Scriptures, rise out of our own carnal hearts. They know well, that a very large proportion is due to the circumstance that the Bible is an ancient book. They ought also to know, that an unexercised mind, however pious, is constantly embarrassed by mistaking difficulties which arise from worldly ignorance, for difficulties due to the spiritual nature of the subject. In such cases (as in all cases) prayer is doubtless good and right. But we are not generally to expect from mere prayer a relief from these perplexities, any more than a miraculous communication of the Greek language.

A natural result of the enthusiastic doctrines advanced concerning the unimportance of worldly knowledge, and the all-sufficiency of the Spirit and prayer, is, that self-confidence, which is the fruitful parent of frivolous fancies and conceits, obtruded upon us as divine mysteries. Those who wish to see the painful but instructive spectacle of prophecy and the Mosaic Law turned into a fit subject for infidel mockery, may read the numerous discussions on these subjects in the Christian Witness.

But we must in conclusion draw attention to a particularly hurtful part of their moral system, rising out of their merely literal interpretations of two or three texts, in which, as we think, the spirit is miserably sacrificed to the letter. From the precept “not to resist evil,” they deduce the unlawfulness of a Christian holding any office of magistracy, in which he may be called on to inflict punishment on a culprit. From the mention also of the devil as prince and god of this world, they infer that to hold office under the civil government, is to pollute oneself with the evil things of Satan. Then (as may be seen fully set forth in Mr. P. F. Hall’s book entitled “Discipleship”), they explain away the apostolic declaration that magistracy is an ordinance of God, into the empty notion that *all* the events of providence are ordered by him, as are tempests and earthquakes. Thus the sceptre of Queen Victoria, and the pistol of a piratical chief are made equally respectable. Mr. Hall, indeed, in his letter to Mr. Venn’s hearers, declares (p. 21), that it is “*not true*” that he holds the government of this world to be under the devil’s guidance. To us it appears that his own book, “Discipleship,” plainly proves that it *is* true. Doubtless he allows in word that magistrates are “God’s ministers,” but he denies it in fact. He believes, (as we all believe), that God regulates and controuls even the devil’s acts, and the acts of evil

men; but he teaches that magistracy is no more of God, than piracy is: and his only reason for obeying the magistrate (as far as we can find) is, because we “ought not to resist evil.”

Now to us it appears that the thirteenth Chapter of the Romans was written precisely and pointedly against the very error, which he and all his party hold. To this error, the ancient disciples, from their position, were peculiarly subject. They beheld the powers of the world leagued to support idolatry; they knew their oppressions to be often enormous: they had heard of different evil spirits as lords of particular countries, and generally, that the devil was the prince of this world.

It was natural for them to infer that magistracy, *as such*, was an evil thing, and not of God. It was established by violence and injustice, supported by force, and constantly applied to wicked purposes. Yet, in spite of this, Paul positively assures them it was an ordinance of God to them for good. It was, indeed, their sole human defence against the bigotry of mobs, stirred up by avarice or hatred on the part of individuals. He alleges that the Christian “must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience’ sake:” whereas it is evident that we are subjected to a cut-throat solely for “wrath,” and not also for conscience’ sake. Some persons might imagine (with Mr. Hall), that the “powers which be” are of Satan, and only the “powers which *shall be*” of God: but Paul teaches, that the powers of the world which *now is*, as well as the powers of the world to come, are ordained of God. If any of the Plymouth brethren have (as is reported), renounced lucrative situations in India, because they would not be made partners to idolatry, we honour them for it. This is to instruct the civil powers in righteousness, by a self-sacrifice which shall prove at length fruitful of good. But if any have given up their places with no other complaint against the {590} government, except the bare fact, that *it is* a government, and justly punishes malefactors; we are unable to honour such, for a conduct which must tend to a dissolution of civil society. Had Mr. P. F. Hall, on renouncing his naval pay and rank, confined his protest to the iniquity of selling one’s conscience and sword to the government, to be employed in any war, just or unjust; we think he would have acted with wisdom, as well as Christian uprightness. But he could not be satisfied, without condemning simultaneously the policeman, the magistrate, the sovereign; without calling on every true Christian to leave these important posts to be occupied by all the rogues of the land, and confounding one who “rules in the fear of God,” with the mercenary soldier of fortune, or a captain of banditti. By setting up so sweeping an argument he has neutralized his protest, and made his book a delusive and mischievous production. We are sorry to have introduced his name thus prominently, while wishing to speak rather of opinions and systems than persons: nor should we have done so, were not his doctrines current in the whole body, and he himself from the beginning a most prominent individual among them. While this error is in theory a libel and affront upon magistracy, it is in practice used to strengthen despotism. A Christian is forbidden even to plead his civil rights against illegal violence, lest he should be using carnal weapons. Let but one entire generation of Christians imbibe this doctrine, and a slavish abjectness of mind will be the certain result.

THE PLYMOUTH BRETHREN AND THE ECLECTIC REVIEW.

IN the May number of the *Eclectic Review*, there appeared an article entitled, “The Plymouth Brethren;” and on that article we have a few remarks to offer. It is by no means our intention to enter here on a defence of the Christians usually known by the name of the “Plymouth Brethren,” but simply to notice the article in the *Eclectic*, in those points where it seems to us to put forth statements irreconcilable with the principles, which, if not generally acknowledged by Christians, are certainly to be found in the Scriptures.

The article in question commences with an invidious eulogy of Mr. R. M. Beverley, for no other reason that we can discern, than to give an appearance of impartiality to the subsequent animadversions on the “Plymouth Brethren.” The writer of the {344} article professes to consider Mr. Beverley a friendly, though somewhat severe, monitor of the Dissenters, and draws a contrast between *his* published sentiments and the opinions of this new “sect which is everywhere spoken against;” though it is quite obvious, from Mr. Beverley’s Letters to Mr. James,\* that that gentleman substantially holds those very views against which the *Eclectic* wishes to excite the antipathies, and turn the indignation of the religious public.

After the preface, the writer makes a most remarkable acknowledgment in the following words: – “At first sight it may appear that the ancient churches vastly excelled us in love and in christian submission; *and we are too sensible of the deep want of these qualities in modern times*, to desire for one moment to comfort either ourselves or others, by depreciating the ancients” (p. 573). This is indeed a melancholy confession! it is a virtual acknowledgment, that all existing sects have failed to elicit the principle and exhibit the features for which we all must acknowledge the Lord Jesus especially established his church. “Love and christian submissiveness” were expected to exist in the church of Christ, not incidentally merely, not as a decoration and ornament of the saints, but as the infallible proof, and unerring sign, that they were indeed that congregation of believers which had been chosen and called in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God the Father. This we are plainly taught by the words of our Lord, “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 ... 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). Now, if it be here asserted, that the corporate unity of “all” believers was to be that visible token by which the world should “believe,” and “know,” that Jesus was sent by the Father; and if, by this very unity, the “perfect” state of the church was to be tested, then is the conclusion inevitable, by the admission of the *Eclectic*, that existing churches do not present an aspect to the world by which it can either “believe” or “know” that the Founder of the Christian religion came into the world with divine authority: and if this be the case three hundred years after that time when Protestants openly came forth from the Church of Rome, in order to set up their churches according to the pattern to be found in the New Testament, then also is the conclusion irresistible, that all attempts at sect-making, according to any principles hitherto sought for amongst

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\* The second edition of Mr. Beverley’s Letters to Mr. James, which has been lately published, with many additions, and with the new title of “The Heresy of a Human Priesthood,” exhibits a still closer approximation of sentiment to the Plymouth Brethren.

us, have utterly failed; and, with such a conclusion, it would indeed be chimerical to attempt any amelioration by new regulation, new codification, new rules of discipline, new pointing, facing, and painting of any fabrics which the hands of men have erected.

By this one single proof, any unprejudiced Christian might, if he would allow himself to take an impartial view of the sect to which he happens to belong, perceive clearly enough that he is externally and visibly to the world the part of a system which answers not the end and design of Him who purchased his church unto himself with his own blood. The love of all the brethren – that love of which so much is said, with the most vivid expressions of holy earnestness, in the New Testament, is not to be found either in the Established Church or amongst Dissenters. None of the dissenting churches practically know what it means: none of the dissenting ministers ever preach on the subject; neither, if they did, could they by a thousand sermons introduce into their churches, *as long as their present system remains*, that principle which is to be the proof to the world that Jesus Christ our Lord came upon earth from God the Father. This is the sacred fire of the true church of God, which is not to be found in existing sects: neither can man, by all his ingenuity in the art and science of church-government, bring into life that spark from which this fire is to be kindled. The love of the brethren is the gift of the Holy Ghost in and to the church of God. All church-government – such church-government as is acknowledged in the Scriptures – resolves itself into this principle; and where this principle is not in action, then there is not the church of God. There may indeed be a sect, and a very decent and orderly one too, and in this sect there may be many {345} individual Christians; but the aggregate is not the aggregate which the Lord owns: it is a congregation of believers, acting together on the terms of a theological treaty of peace, and united together to stamp their approbation on a certain class of religious opinions. The Dissenters' churches are more schools of theology than a gathering of the Lord's people. To uphold a correct system of divinity is far more the object of these churches, than to manifest the life and power of the saints living together in love and union with one another, and with their divine Head.

The Eclectic writer, however, perceives not this deficiency; he has no adequate conception of the Church of God. The ideas of unity entertained by this writer all run on the theory of a theological accordance: on this he argues *pro* and *con* as if, could he but succeed in placing this subject in a clear light, he should then solve the great problem; though, in truth, all his remarks on this subject are entirely beside the question, and are such as interest us not at all: for how should those who know what the Church of God really is, care to answer a question like the following: “The most common cause which leads churches to divide into two, rather than cohere and grow as one, is found in the preference of preachers; and how is this difficulty to be fought against by pressing all churches into one?” (p 574).

The Eclectic writer having, however, made the confession already noticed, has unintentionally cleared the way for something that should represent the Church to the world in another light than it has hitherto been seen – he has in part pronounced condemnation on all sects, by plainly acknowledging “the deep want of love amongst them all” – and with such an acknowledgment has prepared us to look with a favourable eye on any Christians, who profess at least to have clearly discovered the cause of failure in all the existing sodalities of Christians.

“We saw,” says the Eclectic writer, “so much to admire in the spirit of the Plymouth Brethren, so *many points of neglected truth prominent in their minds*, that it was long before we gave up the hope that they would exhibit to England a pattern of a more excellent way than has yet been seen.” This, coupled with the previous confession, is a very

incautious admission; for though it is only a passing word, and though the writer never afterwards mentions one of these “many points of neglected truth” which have been prominent in the minds of those whom he seeks to overwhelm with censure, yet he has thus said enough to leave a strong suspicion on the mind of an impartial reader, that there must be something with these said “Plymouth Brethren” which deserves a more extended, and in truth a more favourable, explanation than this writer has vouchsafed to furnish.

The Eclectic writer says of the “Brethren,” that they “are likely to be chiefly signal as firebrands in the Christian world, and *supporters of all political oppression* (p. 575,) though this accusation he afterwards vitiates by complaining that they abstain from all politics, whether of a general or local bearing, refuse “the rights of worldly citizenship, and think it sinful to submit to bear sway in the world” – two accusations that cannot possibly stand together, for how can that man “support all political oppression” who carefully abstains from all politics and refuses to interfere directly or indirectly with the evolving events of the age in which he lives?

The secret of this complaint is, however, to be sought for in the politics of the writer, which are evident enough: he is a political Dissenter, who views with triumphant anticipations, “the growing power of popular sentiments” (p. 585), but with mingled uneasiness and hatred the formidable array of his Tory antagonists. But it is not with this fact that we are concerned, but with *the principle* of the writer, on which we have already frequently expressed our opinion: the principle is this, that Christians are bound to join in political opposition against political oppression, or that which seems to them to savour of oppression. Many words need not be wasted in unravelling the intricacies of this dogma, which, though it is not directly asserted by the Eclectic Reviewer is certainly at the bottom of all his remarks on the political feeling of the “Brethren,” whom he is determined to consider a nest of aristocratic Tories, leagued together by principles favourable to popular oppression. But what, we ask, is the duty of a Christian on this head? Ought he to be a “loyal man” – i. e., a Tory, and support a Tory government and the conservative interest? or ought he to be a liberal, and to be seeking by very vigorous exertions to “promote the greatest possible good of the greatest possible number?” We reply, that he should be neither Tory nor liberal – that he has nothing at all to do with politics; that they do not concern him in any form or shape; and that he who {346} “has been translated out of the power of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son,” must not interfere in any way, either to aid oppression or to resist it. The Eclectic writer seems, indeed, not a little puzzled with the precepts of Scripture on this head. His politics, which are plainly of the liberal class, and of a very active order too, lead him to attribute a high merit to resistance, on the plea of vindicating mankind from oppression; and on this account he is ill pleased with “the Brethren,” who by their non-resistance refuse to help his party – a line of conduct which he calls “*supporting* all political oppression;” but when he comes to investigate that which he supposes to be the secret of the non-resistance, he is compelled to take a line of argument which has ever been followed by the highest school of the Tories in their denunciations of the liberals. He supposes that “the Brethren” refrain from politics because they think government an evil; and therefore undertakes to shew, from Scripture, that it is no evil thing, that it is not of the Devil, but is a good thing for Christians. He takes the 13th chapter of Romans for his text; and remarks, “that Paul positively assured the Christians it was an ordinance of God to them for good – it *was, indeed, their sole human defence against the bigotry of mobs stirred up by avarice or hatred on the part of individuals.*”



If this, indeed, was the motive for the “loyalty” of Christians (such as the Eclectic writer requires, when it suits him, with marvellous inconsistency, to preach Toryism), we may truly say that the Christians had small cause to *support* the powers that then existed; for, so far from the Roman Emperors being the protectors of the Christians, we know that, on many occasions, they, of their own authority, “*ex mero motu*,” instigated the mob to commit cruelties on the flock of Christ. Was it the mob, or the Emperor Nero, that tortured the Christians in the imperial gardens, after the burning of Rome? Was Nero, in this sense, “an instrument of good” to the Christians? And yet, under this very Emperor, Paul commanded “every soul in the Church to be subject unto the higher powers; because there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God” (Rom. xiii. 1). – This we interpret to mean, that *the existing authorities are established by God*: they are part of his plan of Providence: they come forth on the stage of this world to bring about events which he has pre-ordained: and because we find them so established we submit to them implicitly. We obey the Queen – she is on the throne. All the commands of *existing authorities* we obey, except where those commands are against the sceptre of the Lord in his Church. We examine not the origin or title of existing authorities: we should obey an usurper precisely as we obey the lawful sovereign. The tyranny of the monarchy, or of the oligarchy, or of a republic – the courtly rapacities of the diadem, the ceremonious extortions of a polite aristocracy, or the brutal outrages of a democratic government, are varied forms of evil to which we cheerfully submit. We obey “the ruler” whoever he may be: but we are not “loyal,” for “loyalty” is a virtue not mentioned in Scripture, though patience, quietness, and obedience, are frequently and earnestly enjoined as characteristics of the Church of God, in its relations with a world that lieth in the wicked one. The Eclectic writer has, indeed, put together some clever sentences about the proper view of government, though, with all his cleverness, he has not succeeded in concealing his own inconsistency on this subject; but he will never be able to persuade us that we are to view government as separated from evil, until he shews a government of which the chief agents are not under the power of the evil one – until he can direct us to some government which does not directly or indirectly encourage sin, either in its domestic or foreign policy, and which does not promote and uphold that which cannot be defended by evangelical authority. The Eclectic writer finds fault with “the Brethren,” because they consider government as part of the providential arrangement of God, which he calls “an empty notion” (p. 589); but will the writer be bold enough to assert that government is an ordinance of God’s *grace*? If not, what shall we say of the magistracy? If it is neither to be revered as part of the providential arrangement of God, nor as an ordinance of grace, in what view are we to contemplate it? The Eclectic writer seems to have found out a *tertium quid* in this difficulty. “The magistracy,” says he, “is neither of Providence nor of grace, but for *protection* of Christians!” – Protection! Truly the Church of Christ has little cause to thank the kings of the earth and the rulers for their “protection” of the Lord’s people: and we suspect that the Eclectic reviewer would, on other occasions, find it extremely difficult to reconcile his theory of protection with his theory of the volun- {347} tary principle of which the very soul is a negation of all protection for Dissenting Churches. The *Eclectic Review* continually inculcates the mischief which protection introduces into the Church of God; but when it suits this same Review to write against “the Brethren,” it can then bring forth “protection,” and sink the “voluntary principle,” with all the composure of a Tory Critic.

But this question, though thus studiously embarrassed, is a very easy one – let Christians but consider their high calling, and their position in the new life with their risen Head. Let them but remember how they are “coming up out of the wilderness, leaning on



the Beloved,” and they will not take any part in *any* politics: the Tory and the Whig, the Conservative and the Liberal, will be names of old things that have passed away, memorials of fallen man’s vain struggle with the curse which is upon the earth, and which is to be removed, not by the sagacious contrivances of the children of the first Adam, but by the power of the second. He who laid the curse upon the earth will, in the restitution of all things, take it off again; but it is not possible that they who work under the curse should themselves remove it; neither with such workmen is the Church to be confederate. The Church is risen above the labourers and the workshops of the builders of the Tower of Babel, and is privileged with “a pure language” above the confusion of their tongues. Her duty in the wilderness is not to interfere directly or indirectly in these great concerns of the children of men: but having her conversation in the heavens, from whence also she looks for the Lord Jesus, she will neither, by her loyalty to human governments, promote oppression, nor, by her indulgence of liberal politics, vainly endeavour to resist it.

Our writer has many things to say against “the Brethren;” because they demand, *according to his statement*, a perfect unanimity of sentiment in all true Christians. Having first invented this matter of accusation, he designates it as “their unreasonable hankering after absolute unanimity” (p. 585). We deny the truth of the statement most emphatically, and could easily shew, if it were worth while, that a greater discrepancy of sentiment practically exists amongst “the Brethren,” than is tolerated in those sects with which the writer is best acquainted. But on this subject all is confusion with the writer; the union of the household of faith in love, and as sons of God joined together in the concord of the new nature, the writer is continually mistaking and misplacing for unanimity of theological views; and he argues backwards and forwards, from one to the other, as if they were the same thing. The concord desired by those whom the writer denounces, is a corporate not a theological union; a cohesion of love and not of opinion. The unanimity before the eyes of the Eclectic writer is the amalgamation of existing sects submitting themselves to one form of church-government, and giving in their adhesion to one code of discipline and one standard of divinity – this is his idea of union, which he supposes “the Brethren” desire, and which he considers himself also bound to speak well of as a possibility in theory, though in another passage he strangely contradicts himself. We put the two passages together: – “Those who desire to blend all the Dissenters of each city into one Church, must shew us how it is to be effected suddenly, at any other expense than by individuals renouncing their private judgments, and thus re-establishing Popery – for ourselves, *we believe it ought to be aimed at*; but that the time is not generally ripe for it, and that to constrain *the form of union*, before the substance is attained, would embitter the quarrel, and make the rent worse” (p. 574). – “For ourselves, the longer we live, *the more desperate do we become* of any greater agreement between sincere Christians than is contained in the *barest fundamentals of the Gospel!*” (p. 586). A writer who can so utterly forget his own words, within the short space of twelve pages, must have imposed upon himself the painful task of defending a very bad cause.

This subject, however, leads the writer on into the promulgation of sentiments which ought to be recorded as a specimen of that vicious medley of philosophical and religious language, which, not only in some periodicals, but in some pulpits also, passes in these days for wisdom sanctified. The sentences we number, not that we intend to comment on them separately, but that we may leave materials for reflection with our readers. (1.) “How shallow is that *philosophy, or that religion*, which desires uniformity in this world. (2.) It could not be attained without sacrificing all individuality of character, all peculiarity of education and experience. (3.) *The world is a scene for the formation of mind*: and in our progress towards perfect truth there must needs be considerable difference of judg-

ment. (4.) Such imperfections {348} call forth many virtues, which otherwise would have had no exercise. (5.) This is in entire consistency with the whole scheme of the world, and with the existence of physical evil. (6.) Moreover, God values minds and hearts more than the propositions or the systems which our minds contemplate; and for the due discipline and cultivation of the former, many a false step must ordinarily be made and discovered. (7.) Power must be gained by fatigues and failures; humility must be taught by the consciousness of error; the feebleness, too, of the human judgment must be displayed by *permanent and irreconcilable differences*" (p. 585).

So teach the philosophers of the sect: but what says the Scripture? "If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, *being of one accord, of one mind*. Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than themselves." (Phil. ii. 1–3). "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be *perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment*" (1 Cor. i. 10). "Be perfect, be of good comfort, *be of one mind*, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you" (2 Cor. xiii. 11).

The philosophical religion of the Eclectic writer can thus scarcely be reconciled with the doctrine of the New Testament.

The charges brought against the "Plymouth Brethren" by this writer, are very numerous, and some of them very minute, frivolous, and trivial; but one of these accusations, though purposely placed amongst the trifles, contains indeed a matter of the most serious import, and which may not be thus treated, as merely one of their absurdities: "If we sigh and groan that not all Christians admit of *open ministry*," says this writer, "our hearts will become hard, on occasions really calling for sorrow." "They say that they are excluded from all dissenting churches by the act of the other party, who, by having fixed teachers, and fixed time for them to teach, grieve and quench the Spirit. Well; it is to be lamented: but do they forget that others have an equal difficulty in bearing with the Plymouth views and practices? It only proves the desperate nature of the attempt after uniformity" (p. 586). Now, the question of "open ministry" is not a minute peculiarity only, it is every thing. All that the dissenters are called upon to defend in their faulty system, and all that "the Brethren" seek to establish, turns upon this point; for, as the writer knows very well, it is not merely a controversy about the number of the teachers, whether there shall be one, or two, or more ministers in a church, but whether this principle shall be acknowledged and acted on in all its bearings, and followed out in all its consequences, that the Holy Spirit is to be ruler and director in the church of God. They that acknowledge this to be a fundamental truth, will, on enquiry, soon discover that its due acknowledgment involves in condemnation all existing arrangements, and that to own it, and to follow it out when owned, would go to the root, yea, and pluck up by the roots, the established order of dissenting churches. The Eclectic writer is well aware of this; and perceiving all the dangerous consequences (dangerous we mean to *sect*) of owning this principle, endeavours at the commencement of his article, by some pages of dexterous special pleading, to solve the problem of church-government, as a question of statistics. He would have us believe, that the members of the early Christian churches were exceedingly numerous, that there were ten thousand members of the church of Antioch in the time of the Apostles; and that, *therefore*, there were many ministers for so many members. We should be sorry to stop here to confute this fable. Any one reading the first verse of the Epistle to the Philippians may see that there was at Philippi a plurality of bishops, or overseers, in

the small church gathered in that town: and, indeed, it would be a figment not more audacious, to assert that there were twenty thousand Christians at Philippi, than to fix ten thousand as the number of believers at Antioch in the time of the Apostles. It is not, however, a question of statistics, and numbers, and of captains over tens, and captains over hundreds, and captains over thousands. They that desire “open ministry,” desire it not merely because it is an ancient ecclesiastical fact; but because it puts the church of God in a condition to be ruled in its corporate capacity by Him who rules every individual believer. “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” This is, in a few words, the mystery of church-government set forth in the {349} Scriptures, but practically forgotten, and now, we fear, in a fair way to be openly denied in dissenting churches; for wherever they admit a salaried ministry, and listen to the teachings of one man, and distinguish between the clergy and the laity, and do not admit the ministrations of the whole body of believers, there are they ignorant of the government of the church by the Holy Spirit, and thus have they set up the wisdom of man to take place of the power of God.

We need say very little more on this head – the bearings of the great principle are obvious. Let it only be acknowledged as a truth, and what will then become of the Dissenting Colleges, and the whole apparatus of the Academical Pastorate? The persons interested perceive the tendency of this alarming truth; and it is the foresight of this tendency which is the chief cause of all their outcries against the “Plymouth Brethren.” A *financial panic* exalts the human voice into a very loud key, and, though many other charges are brought forward against “the new sect,” and though they are liberally accused of “spiritual pride,” “schism,” “intolerance,” “bigotry,” &c. &c., these charges would all be forgotten if the “liberty of ministry” were not their chief sin; and if by divulging that forgotten truth they did not invade the tranquillity and disturb the slumbers of the ancient establishments.

The writer in the Eclectic speaks on these topics with the bitterness of personal feeling. He knows what it is to see Christians leaving the old Sectarian folds, where there is no love of the brethren, and no acknowledged government of the Spirit in the Church, in order to join those Christians who love one another, and who desire to see, in all the brethren, a manifestation “of the *manifold* grace of God.” Many a dereliction of sect, on these grounds, he has seen and felt, and many more he will yet see and feel; and hence it is that he charges “the Brethren” with “zeal for proselyting persons,” and with a “carelessness of what *spiritual ties* they burst while pressing their theories” (p. 575). But let the blame be put in the proper place; the power of making proselytes in this “new sect” is not in their own exertions, which, it is to be presumed, are not a whit more vigorous than the exertions of Dissenters to make proselytes from the Established Church – but in the spiritual debility of the Dissenting Churches themselves. It may be exceedingly galling to a Dissenting Minister to see his people leaving him, particularly when he is conscious of his own abilities, and his own zeal; but they who know what it is to sigh for a union with believers in the bonds of spiritual affection, and who can understand the power of the new commandment that believers should “love one another” – who are persuaded that God, and not man, should rule in the Church, and that the Holy Spirit should direct the household of faith, can scarcely be expected to rest contented with the cold deadening form of mere Church discipline; and will, therefore, ever be inclined to go forth and to find peace for their souls elsewhere, “careless of the rupture of the *spiritual tie*” which now exists between a paying laity and a paid clergy.

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REPLY TO AN ARTICLE IN THE ELECTIC {sic} REVIEW, ON "THE  
PLYMOUTH BRETHREN."

[The following remarks on a subject to which we have already referred (see July Number, p. 343), have been communicated to us by one of the "Brethren."]

IT is at all times sufficiently distressing to those who desire to walk in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and, according to the law of love, to be compelled by a sense of duty to point out even doctrinal errors, calculated injuriously to affect the glory of the Lord or the spiritual welfare of His people. But how much more painful is the task, when it becomes needful to bring to light positive misrepresentations and departures from truth, whether in the shape of disingenuous insinuations, or direct and open misstatements, put forward *by* those who profess to be the disciples of Jesus, and *against* those whose claim to be regarded as his people is fully acknowledged by their accusers. This task, however painful though it be, is seldom difficult; inasmuch as the testimony of a false witness rarely hangs so well together as to bear a rigid scrutiny; and therefore, independently of any extrinsic evidence to contradict it, there is generally sufficient internal proof of its inconsistency with itself and with truth, to leave it open to easy exposure.

If the ascription of unscriptural doctrines, or sinister intentions, to any disciple or body of disciples, were to affect themselves only, without touching the Lord's glory, the honour of his truth, or the welfare of His saints, there should not be a moment's hesitation as to the course which they should pursue; namely, to suffer such charges and aspersions to pass altogether unnoticed; satisfied with the assurance that their judgment was with their God, that the truth and the falsehood were alike open to Him, and that the day was coming when the Lord would "bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts;" believing also his words in the days of his flesh: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall *say all manner of evil against you falsely* for my sake, rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven," &c. But perhaps this writer thinks it foolish to take such passages literally (see p. 579); as also such a one as this, "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of my brethren, ye did it unto *me*."

The Lord, however, is not only the Comforter of His people, but was their forerunner also in this species of trial; for, when here below, he said, "They laid to my charge *things that I knew not*;" and again, "They devise deceitful matters against them that are *quiet in the land*." And how could it be otherwise with *Him*? for darkness loves not to be re-proved or made manifest; and He was "the light" which "maketh manifest." *He* was indeed "quiet in the land," "*He* did not strive nor cry, neither was His voice heard in the street;" *He* was no loud and busy meddler with this world's politics. But still (and here was the secret of all) *He* would not "prophesy smooth things" to a religious but ungodly people; and therefore they were angry. *He* "told them the truth;" and therefore they believed *Him* not. Strange reason! and yet ever the reason of unbelief. *He* wanted to do them good, for *He* was a *true* "*philanthropist*;" but it was in God's way, and not their own; and therefore they "hated *Him* without a cause."

But, though a Christian should have no anxiety about character *in the abstract*, or in reference to self, which would be just seeking "the honour that cometh from men," and, therefore, as regarded himself only, should be very careless about self-vindication, as having personally to do with God (though surely he should "exercise himself herein, to

have a *conscience* void of offence toward God and toward men"); yet, if scripture and experience teach us that the Lord's glory may be affected before men, by the known or supposed principles and conduct of those who profess to be His – if impediments and offences may be placed in the way of sinners – if the hearts of the Lord's people may be made sorrowful, and their minds shaken by unfounded imputations of error to their brethren; then, indeed, it becomes the paramount duty of the latter, nay, a labour of love, to vindicate themselves and expose the falsehood;\* and, should any still be hurt by the "slandrous report" (Rom. iii. 8), the responsibility, and it is a solemn one, rests upon him, who, in thus sinning against his weak disciples, sins against Christ himself. "It must needs be that offences come: but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!"

Having said thus much, as to my reason for noticing it at all, I shall now proceed to make some observations upon a paper which has appeared in the *Eclectic Review* for the month of May last, entitled, "The Plymouth Brethren;" a production sadly illustrative of the low state of moral principle which characterises the religious controversy of the present day, "*per fas aut nefas*" being, in reality, too often the principle of procedure when an end is to be gained, and the loudest and angriest opponents of Romanism frequently proving that they can give it a lesson in carrying out the maxim, that the means are sanctified by the end. If the author of this article be a Christian man, for his soul's sake I can rejoice, but for the truth's sake I cannot; for it does no honour to the truth. One thing, however, is evident, namely, that if the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ has ceased to be foolishness to him, yet many of the words and ways of Jesus are so still. With respect to the former, he may have laid aside for a moment "the wisdom of this world," but, as regards the latter, he has taken it up again.

This singular production consists of two parts; a confession of evil on the part of modern Dissenters, and a series of charges against the "Plymouth Brethren;" and before noticing the latter, I shall make some observations on the former.

The evil acknowledged is a departure from the "apostolic model." "It would argue," says this writer, "little knowledge, or little *discretion* (not honesty), in English Independents or Baptists, to justify their adherence to their respective communities, on the ground that these were organised according to a perfect apos- {494} tolic model." And yet some of these "sects,"\* which have thus admittedly departed from the apostolic model (which, as regards ecclesiastical order, is simply apostasy), are immediately afterwards spoken of as "acknowledging no authority but that of *Christ and his apostles!*" This is like praising a servant for his respectful submission to his master's authority, while he was breaking his commands, and running counter to his orders. A simple mind, however, would regard this, not as subjection, but presumption and self-will.

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\* We have the example of Paul for such vindication. As to *himself*, he could, in the consciousness of the integrity of his heart, say, "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's judgment:" and yet, for the sake of *others*, he frequently vindicated himself from the most unworthy charges. Nay, a greater than Paul, who said, "I receive not testimony from man," could nevertheless turn his opposers over to that of John, because of the esteem in which they had held him, and say, "These things I say unto you *that ye might be saved.*" This testimony was to prove that he was not a deceiver.

\* This is the writer's own self-condemning word, not mine, though I believe it to be most correct. It is assumed throughout his paper that the hindrance of the Spirit, in His gifts, is the only ground of "the Brethren's" testimony against these systems. Surely it is a chief one; but there is another distinct and important one involved in the title here assigned by the writer to such systems. They are so constructed as to admit the world, while they scatter and exclude numbers of the saints. Their bond of *union* is some point of *difference* (not fundamental) from others; a point from which, for the most part, each takes its distinguishing name. Now this is sectarianism, or what constitutes a sect. (See Rom. xiv. 1, 17, 18; xv. 7).



The writer then proceeds to speak of what he calls "primitive episcopacy," in which the bishop was not an "isolated minister," but "*primus inter pares*," as the first departure from the divine order and appointment; and this, because of the necessity of the case. Is not the assertion of such a necessity a bold imputation of want of wisdom and forethought to God?

Next in order follows an acknowledgment that even this departure has been entirely departed from by modern dissenting churches. "The organisation of modern dissenting churches (he says) having rarely even a *pretence of similarity*† to the churches of the first century,‡ it is not wonderful that those who are honestly desirous of following *the highest antiquity* [why not Scripture?] should, from time to time, *utter loud remonstrances* against our present degenerate condition." And yet he is very angry with a certain "class of brethren" for being loud in declamation against this degenerate condition of things; which some one, it would appear, has justly entitled, "the one-man system," as distinguishing it from the divine order set forth in Scripture, of many members, ministering their respective gifts, and performing their proper functions, for the healthful growth and increase of the body (see Ro. xii. 3, 8). The anger or censure of man is, however, a small thing; but I would press it upon the conscience of this writer, to consider with whom *God* is most angry, those who confess but coolly abide in degeneracy of condition, and apostasy from *His* order, or those who, having discovered this apostasy, have withdrawn from it, and even uttered "loud remonstrances against it;" which is at least "not wonderful;" according to his own admission. Their accuser, however, is in error in supposing that their cry is "*Delenda est Carthago*." This is neither their object nor their cry. They would leave Carthage to itself. It is with the {495} *saints in Carthage* that *they* have to do: and this they would acknowledge, that they do earnestly desire to see the children of God, scattered through these modern churches, withdrawing from them, returning in the fear of the Lord, not to "antiquity" merely, but to the principles of God's holy word, and leaving those productions of the self-will of man to themselves.

This writer, however, having "on the part of the congregational Churches, pleaded guilty of a "deviation from antiquity," proceeds to offer a vindication of this; not by an appeal to Scripture, shewing that the necessity for such a departure had been foreseen, and provision made for it; but by a numerical calculation exhibiting all the freezing coldness without any of the certainty, of a sum in arithmetic, the data being mere conjectures

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† I would here, once for all, observe, that the italics here and in many other quotations from this writer are sometimes mine; the words always his own.

‡ These departures from the divine order are sometimes vindicated on the plea of Christian liberty. Alas! how far can some carry this liberty when it suits their purpose, and upon points where the Scriptures have given no liberty, and upon which, therefore, liberty is license; while they at the same time angrily denounce those who may, in the fear of God, use liberty of judgment in matters as to which the Apostolic word gives them liberty, with this qualification only, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" (see Rom. xiv. 5). How zealous were some of old for certain ordinances, while they were "making the word of God of none effect through their traditions," and "teaching for doctrines *the commandments of men*." *The Sabbath was their weapon against Christ!* (see John v. 16; vii. 23; ix. 16, &c.). I confess I am at a loss to know what just ground of complaint those who make such acknowledgments of departure from the "Apostolic model" have against the Establishment, or even Romanism. They both alike have their traditions; and I see no reason why those of modern congregationalist doctors should take precedence of those of the fathers or reformers. Let them, however, settle this amongst themselves. It gives no embarrassment to those who are accustomed to "prove *all things*" by *the Apostolic word*. It does not, however, require much penetration to discern that their opposition to establishments is, for the most part, the result of fleshly emulation (see Gal. v. 20), and not of godly "abhorrence of evil." Witness that most evil combination, entitled, "The General Association for Promoting Religious Equality" (see the *Inquirer* for January, 1839).



and suppositions; for example, "*suppose* that the Church at Antioch had twenty presbyters; *perhaps* at the same time there were at least 10,000 members." What is then assumed to have been established by this conjectural calculation, is, that as there was, of old, an average of but one teacher to two or three hundred souls, the modern Churches are not comparatively deficient in this respect.\* And yet he seems to think that, were it practicable, it might be desirable to increase the number of teachers; but that it is not so. And why? The only reason given is, not that additional teachers could not be supplied; the Colleges would I suppose, furnish any required number of *them*. Not because of want of gifts; scholastic divinity and rhetoric would be a sufficient substitute for *these*. But that "*adequate pecuniary support* for the increased number is unattainable;" and that "hence, the new teachers would be *only lay-elders*, capable of giving but a fraction of their time to the immediate service of the ministry."

Now, several questions are naturally suggested to the mind by the above observations; as, for example, does the writer really suppose that such a subject as this, is to be settled like a system of poor laws, or any other question of political economy, by an arithmetical calculation? Does he indeed suppose that a distribution of teachers, at the rate of one to each congregation of 200, or 300 souls, is in any wise analogous or equivalent to the ministration of their various gifts by twenty or more members,† to any one congregation however large? Does he imagine that it is only to the deficiency in the *number* of their teachers that we object, and not to the *very principle* of their ministry, as confounding all gifts, names, and ministrations, and running counter to every declaration of Scripture on the subject? Does he think, for example, that, if six evangelists were allotted to one congregation, six pastors to another, and six teachers to a third, this increase of numbers would set all right? Or does he believe, contrary to Scripture, which says "*some*, evangelists, and *some* pastors and teachers;" and again "there are *diversities of gifts*, but the same Spirit." ..... "For to *one* is given by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to *another* the word of knowledge by the same Spirit, &c." and again, "but all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit *dividing to each one* (ἐκαστῷ) *severally as HE will*." Does he, I say, believe that, notwithstanding all this, the teachers in modern Churches have, *each* necessarily *all* needful gifts? If so; they are evidently not the *distributive* gifts of the Spirit, divided to each according to *His* will, but the artificial gifts of the College, alike dealt forth, *all to each*, according to *its* will.‡

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\* Even a "natural man" would regard this argument as an insult to his common sense. It is, indeed, difficult to suppose that the writer is not trifling. Would he venture to apply this principle to common schools? No. Besides the palpable fallacy of it, the cultivation of mere intellect is considered by modern Dissenters far too important a thing to be thus trifled with. In his admission (p. 571) of the disadvantage of the limitation of ministry in a congregation to a single teacher, the only reason given is "the *contraction of intellect*" which it engenders in the hearers. After all, is this calculation designed to show that what he has styled degeneracy is not degeneracy at all?

† The real meaning of exclusive and of open ministry, and the difference between them is, I believe, generally little understood. It might not be the will of the Lord for a number of years to raise up in a Christian church more than one individual qualified to minister in the word. If, however, there was an open door left meanwhile for any upon whom it might please the Lord to bestow ability to minister his gift for the common profit, this would not be exclusive ministry. But if, in another church, the ministry of the word were extended even to ten or twenty members, and then arbitrarily limited to that number, this would be that exclusive ministry which the Scripture calls schism (1 Cor. xii.).

‡ If this be the case, we may also say, there need be no objection at all as regards the {496} number of teachers; so far, at least, as mere teaching is concerned; for a single individual having all gifts, if sufficient to minister to twenty souls, would be equally so to minister to the greatest number by whom he could make

{496} Again, I would ask, what does this writer mean by "*lay* elders?" or, is there such a title to be found in Scripture? Is it because a person "apt to teach" is obliged to devote a portion of his time to secular labour, being desirous not to be "chargeable" to any, and not being provided with "adequate pecuniary support," (that is sufficient to enable one to live like a *gentleman*, and to give all his time, *if he please*, to the ministry of the word, and to prayer), that he should be so styled? Was Paul for this reason a *lay* Apostle? for he "wrought with labour and travail night and day, that he might not be chargeable" to the Thessalonians. Does this writer soberly think that every teacher was an elder at all, lay, or otherwise? Why is it assumed that none are to be found qualified by God for such ministry, who, having means of support themselves, that is, "food and raiment," which was enough for an apostle, need not be burdensome to others? Why is it that so few, *if any*, of this class are to be found amongst "modern churches?" Is it not because "the ministry," as it is called, is a *profession*,\* that is, a way to obtain an income by those who have none, and a means of increasing the income of those who have; and who, if they understood the calling of Saints, and felt as they ought the love of Christ, would deem it their high and happy privilege to serve him for nought; yea, to *spend* and be spent in His service? And lastly, I would ask, are there any persons qualified by the Holy Spirit, forced, for the reasons above noticed, to refrain from ministry? If so, is not this to quench His gifts (1 Thes. v. 19, 20), and rob the Church of what belongs to it of right? Is it even reasonable to refuse a portion of the time of such because they cannot give it all? and would they act upon this principle in any matter affecting their temporal interest? Would they refuse a portion of any man's *gold or silver* because he could not give it all?

How different is the perfect and beautiful order of God, as to ministry, from that which human wisdom and policy have established. The *divine* order being the distribution of varied gifts to the members, respectively, for the profit of all (ἐἰς τὸ συμφέρον) *according to the sovereign will of the Spirit* (1 Cor. xii. 7, 11; Eph. iv. 11, 16; Col. ii. 19). The *human* order being a machinery of colleges and scholastic study and discipline, to make teachers *according to the will of man*; each of whom is at once supposed to possess every gift, though having in reality perhaps only some single gift, perhaps no gift, from God; and is then sent forth to minister exclusively to some large body of professing disciples, as pastor, teacher, exhorter, evangelist, &c.; one member usurping the functions of all, – "the eye saying to the hand, I have no need of thee." Again, the *divine* order being that the simple possession of a gift makes the possessor, at once, a debtor to the Lord, and to the Church to use it (1 Pet. iv. 10; Ro. xii. 4–8; 1 Cor. xii. 4–25). The human order being that there must be, first, a prescribed course of study; secondly, a call *to* some congregation; thirdly, "adequate pecuniary support;" and lastly, the ordination of man; or else the qualified person must remain inactive, and his gifts dormant.

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himself heard. There is here, also, throughout, the assumption, that teachers, as soon as appointed to minister, are, *ipso facto*, placed above the necessity of being either exhorted or taught, though often needing it more than many of their hearers. The whole system of ministry in modern churches involves this notion; and hence, while their teacher is, *ex officio*, the best instructed and most holy person in the congregation: he is often, *in fact*, inferior in both respects to many of his hearers; but none may presume to teach the teacher, or to exhort the exhorter.

\* The following passage appeared in the *Congregational Magazine* for April: – "They (men of the world) know the affinity that subsists between the *sciences*; and when they find a man ill furnished upon other topics [*i. e.* science and literary attainments – see the context] they will not be disposed to give him credit for any great supremacy of wisdom *in his own profession!*" I quote the above from the *Inquirer* for May: it is the language of the reviewer of Dr. Leifchild's "Counsels to a Young Minister."

The writer then proceeds to account for the *greater number* of teachers, in the early churches, by asserting that "the attraction of cohesion" [a new name for Christian love] was greater amongst disciples then, than it is now; and that "if all the Congregationalists in London, Birmingham, or Bristol, were to cohere, as in ancient days, they might have *as fine a show* of Presbyters as had Rome, or Alexandria. How much more so, if all the *professors* of religion of *every class and sect*, were so united into a single Church." That is, if all the Pharisees, the covetous, &c., for they are almost all professors (many of them very serious too) of religion in some class or sect, were to be assembled together and called a Church!

Their deficiency in this principle of cohesion, is then admitted to be their "sin;" and next, this sin is defended (p. 573); and then we are told that *though the Scripture precedents be against them*, there having been many elders at Ephesus, yet that "experience having shewn us the mischief of those powerful organisations" to which this "attraction of cohesion" gave rise, we are "not to desire to imitate so closely the *earliest churches* in a matter which turned out so hurtful to them;" or, at least, not to "grieve *very much* if exactly that state of things is now unattainable." That is, we are not to desire that, or to grieve very much for the lack of it, which it is our sin not to have!

This writer then notices "the most common cause which leads churches to divide into two, rather than cohere and grow in one," namely, "the preference of preachers." This state of things he admits to be "*bad, painful, humbling*;" but says that it cannot be "fought against by pressing all the churches into one." It is true he says, that it is only by blending all the *Dissenters\** of each city into one Church, that he can imitate the ancients, "and cease to go on in the one-man system;" but this cannot be effected suddenly, though "*it ought*," he says, "to be aimed at." In other words, those powerful organisations which experience has shewn to be so mischievous, and which we had been told were "too hurtful" to be desired, should, nevertheless, "be aimed at!"

Thus far we have, in this paper, seen aggravated evil coolly confessed, and as coolly vindicated. The writer now proceeds to introduce his notice of the "Plymouth Brethren," by declaring that their's are the only churches against which he "dare throw a stone;" and this, because, by their "claim of universal, exclusive dominion, they carry schism and implacable war on their front." This is indeed a grave charge; but except remonstrance against a state of things admitted to be a thorough departure from "the apostolic model," "a degenerate condition," "bad, painful, and humbling," except this, I say, amounts to a claim of "universal, exclusive dominion," and except separation from systems justly entitled *sects* by their advocate, amounts to the guilt of schism, they may with great confidence, and a good conscience, plead guiltless in this matter. And if this their remonstrance be almost universal in its aspect, it is accounted for by our opposer when he says, that this bad and degenerate state of things is the case, "not of congregationalism, but of Protestantism."

This writer professes that "he has watched, with deep and anxious interest, the rise and progress of the views of this body of Christians" (p. 574), and, that in so doing, he "saw so much to admire in the *spirit* of the men, so many points of *neglected truth* prominent in their minds, that it was long before he gave up the hope that they would exhibit to England a pattern of a more excellent way than she had yet seen." It appears also (see p. 581), that he is "most fully convinced, that a very large proportion of them are not

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\* This assumes that *all* dissenters, and none but dissenters, are saints, if, indeed, which is more than doubtful, he understands by "a church" any thing more than a congregation of *men*, whether believers or not.

only amiable and respectable as individuals, but *devotedly pious*, and anxious to do that of which they talk so much – to be subject to the Spirit in all things." He has discovered, too, that "they voluntarily spend their energies or fortunes in the cause of Christ and their opinions." Now, if this be indeed so (and it is the testimony of one who, if he will not permit them to regard him as their enemy, see p. 581, is certainly not their friend), we may venture to say that these Christians have already, in some small degree, succeeded in shewing to England, "a more excellent way," and that the disappointment of their eulogist and accuser is, at least in some measure, groundless.

The cause, however, of his disappointment and complaint is, "not any error in bare opinions; errors *equally great*," he says, "he may himself hold unawares; and many of their opinions appear to him *to involve valuable truth*." No. "It is the exclusive dogmatic spirit, the scornful supercilious tone,† the absolute refusal to {498} co-operate, on neutral ground,\* the zeal for proselyting persons, not to Christ,† but to a new system, &c., the carelessness what spiritual ties‡ they burst, while pressing their theories; the false principles of reasoning and judgment set up for idolatry; their contempt of all who contest their

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† This is one of those charges which are easily preferred; but which, from their very {498} nature, it is impossible to answer. Besides, every one forms his own idea of what dogmatism is, and indeed I suppose there never yet has been a faithful witness against evil, who has not been accounted dogmatic by those whose consciences have been disturbed, and their self-complacency interrupted, by such testimony. I cannot accuse this writer of dogmatism; his principles appear too lax and unsettled for that; and besides, as regards himself and his associates, he only stands upon the defensive. But it has seldom fallen to my lot to peruse a production so replete with sarcasm and ill-concealed scorn, as that which I am now noticing.

\* That is, ground which would involve a violation of principle, a sanction of evil, and defilement of conscience.

† This is the oft-reiterated charge, repeated again and again, without the least regard to facts, or, at least, inquiry into them. I admit that these Christians are not anxious to preach the gospel to *saints*, or, in other words, to beseech those who are already "reconciled to God" to be reconciled. But to the world – "the Christian world" (if this writer please) – and to the poor, without money and without price, is the gospel preached by these Christians, not only in their own places of worship, but often in the open air, and in hired rooms, so mean and homely, as not to shame the nakedness and poverty of the ragged poor; though they might, indeed, offend the delicacy of many a modern well-remunerated evangelist. I believe also that many a poor soul, delivered from the double bondage of fear and sin, can testify that it has not been preached by them in vain. In this, however, as in all things, they are full ready humbly to acknowledge how short they come.

‡ If the things insisted upon be not the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, then those who press them upon the consciences of believers are not only responsible for the disruption of any godly ties which may be the result of their testimony, but for what is far worse, the propagation of error. But this must first be shewn from the scriptures of truth (*an authority no where appealed to by this writer*) before guilt can be fastened upon any. If, however, the things insisted upon be the commandments of the Lord, then I know of no tie which should not give place to obedience. I believe many of those whose supposed unfeeling carelessness is here denounced, can testify that they have often paused, and felt well disposed, had not a sense of duty urged them on, to refrain altogether from testimony in many cases, from a tender sense of the trials into which it might, if effectual, lead those who should be influenced by it; trials, too, which they had willingly encountered themselves.

It is not, however, I would add, every *religious* tie that is necessarily *spiritual*. That word of the Lord, "teaching them to observe all things," &c., has been the cause of breaking many a religious, but never a really spiritual tie; for the tie that would resist it could not be spiritual. Suppose, for example, this writer's anticipations had been realised, and that these Christians *had* shewn to England "a more excellent way," would it not have either broken many a tie which *he* would call spiritual, or have involved him and others in the guilt of disobedience? For surely "the more excellent way," as soon as known, should be followed. One would suppose, from this complaint, that dissenters were very tender in this respect, and very careless about proselytizing; but is it so?

modes of thinking; their unwise scoffs against learning and education; their opposition to every effort to educate men's minds, or benefit their civil condition:" these are the things which have convinced him "that they are likely to be chiefly signal as firebrands in the Christian world, and supporters of all *political oppression*."

After this ebullition of feeling, which is indeed a sort of synopsis of all that follows, the writer, who is determined that the "Brethren" shall have a creed, and a long and authoritative one, too, proceeds to set forth a great number of doctrinal propositions as the articles of their belief; and these he represents as being peremptorily enforced upon the consciences of disciples by a body of Christians, one of whose principal grounds of separation from modern ecclesiastical systems, is actually the imposition of such burdens by the latter upon the people of God, and their requiring from them, as terms of communion, what God has not required!

The source from which this writer pretends to have chiefly drawn materials to enable him thus to "consolidate their tenets," is a periodical entitled the *Christian Witness*, a publication which avowedly gives insertion to papers containing opposite opinions upon many points, and upon the cover of each number of which is printed the following extract from the Preface: "It is our anxious wish that this publica- {499} tion should not be considered as *the depository of particular views or as representing particular persons*. The truth of God and holiness, we trust to be enabled to preserve untainted by that which may appear in it, and, these secured, to receive all communications which may administer to the conscience of the Church of God."\*

To assume, therefore, that every opinion contained in every paper in this periodical, is held by those Christians as a body, or, indeed by any one of them, except the particular writer, and to set it forth as one of the articles of their faith, is manifestly unwarrantable. Were I thus to select statements and opinions from the accredited organs of the Dissenters; were I, for example, to pick out the following view of Christian ministry from the *Congregational Magazine*, namely, "From these considerations we may clearly see the importance of eminent holiness in the ministers of the sanctuary, whose office it is to speak to the people in the name of God, *and to address God in behalf of the people*. The one-half of their duty *consists in intercession*, and the other in the proclamation of the truth as it is in Jesus:"† – were I, (I repeat) to take this definition of *priesthood*, worthy as it is of Oxford, or of Rome, and to charge it upon congregationalists as a body, how quickly would the cry of want of Christian candour and charity be raised by this writer and his associates?

In these observations I have supposed the opinions imputed to "the Brethren" to be actually contained in this publication in question, and substantiated by quotations from it. But it is quite otherwise; for there is not, throughout this writer's attack, a reference to a single passage in that periodical, nor a single quotation either from it or from certain other publications,‡ the titles of which are placed in threatening attitude at the head of his paper, as though preparing us for a review of them.

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\* To the above I would add the following extract from the same preface: – "But while this is preserved (*i. e.* the foundations of truth), for which we do feel responsible to God, the particular light which may be afforded in each paper, and the soundness of the views or judgment contained in it, must rest on the responsibility of the particular writer."

† This statement appeared in the April number of the above-mentioned periodical, according to the *Inquirer* for May, from which I quote.

‡ "Discipleship," by Percy Hall; "Schismatic Tendency of Sectional Membership;" "The Memorial of the Brethren in Christ." He neither quotes these nor any one of their tracts.



Thus much for the *moral* character of this production. § We have already, in this writer's observations upon Churches, seen what value is to be set upon his *sentiments*, we here see the value of his *statements*. But this is not all: for I shall be able to shew, by actual quotations from the publications of this body of Christians, both those, the titles of which are put forward by our accuser, and others, that they hold views the very reverse of what are here imputed to them.

I shall now proceed to notice, as they occur, some of the numerous articles of doctrine which this writer thus gratuitously imputes to the "Plymouth Brethren." I have, for convenience, numbered them, and find that they amount to fifty; amongst which, strange to say, there is not one relating to the grounds of a sinner's hope toward God, nor to any of the *essentials* of Christian truth. I suppose, therefore, that on these heads he has nothing to lay to the charge of "the Brethren;" for he surely evinces no disposition to spare them if he had. The first article is as follows:

Article 1. (p. 575). "Their fundamental tenet is the same as the Quakers, viz.; that the energies of the Holy Spirit are still given to the Church, in so emphatic and peculiar a mode, ¶ as to make all Church arrangements for edification unlawful." {500} He then, confounding the idea of arrangement\* with that of organisation, declares that, because they are opposed to the former, they therefore attack "organisation *as such*." The arrangement, however, of which he speaks, and against which they protest, is a thing which actually breaks up the organisation of the body of Christ, being no less than the nomination of a single member of the body as the sole person to minister to it, thus making him an effectual barrier, and this not for a day only, but perpetually, to the exercise of all the varied gifts and functions of the other members. Now, in protesting against so unholy an arrangement as this, which indeed this writer himself has acknowledged to be evil, they consider that they are opposing *schism* (1 Cor. xii. 25), and upholding "*organisation*." But

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§ This omission is evidently the result of inability to substantiate by extracts from this periodical, notwithstanding its free and open character, a single statement contained in his paper, except as to views in which any saint should glory. But this writer is well aware that those who are prepared to give ear to such charges, will neither spend their money in purchasing, nor their time in reading, a work of five octavo volumes, and some odd numbers besides, to verify his statements; and that those whom he thus accuses will hardly undertake to reperuse those volumes in order to refute his charges.

¶ I know not what is here intended by the expression "in so emphatic and peculiar a mode." The question is, Are there *any* gifts from God for edification now at all? and are they variously distributed, according to the will of the Spirit? If there be such gifts, who may presume by any human arrangement to hinder their exercise? If there be no such {500} gifts, then there is no such thing as spiritual ministry in the church now; for Scripture never contemplates or speaks of any ministry in the way of teaching, except of the gifts of the Spirit. And I would ask this writer what he, or his brother dissenters are, upon this supposition, ministering? Is it not the attainments and learning of the college? For this, indeed, it may be allowed, that "arrangement" is both needful and suitable; neither the one nor the other, however, should be recognised as being of God.

\* The term "arrangement," here used, is a very mild one, conveying the idea of some trifling regulations made to avoid confusion; a term calculated to lead those who are not familiar with its nature, or the great question which it involves, to exclaim against the unreasonableness of those who could object to it. This same "arrangement," however, as it exists amongst both Churchmen and Dissenters, is a thing which violates and breaks through the very foundation-principle of ministry under the present dispensation, and is founded upon the unscriptural novelty of a distinction between priests and people, clergy or ministers, and laity. This arrangement has been thus described by one who is well acquainted with, and has searchingly exposed, many of the evils of modern churches: – "The Dissenting minister, on the Lord's day – on that day alone on which all the brethren *can* meet together – is the sole person that visibly accomplishes the service of God; no one but he speaks; no one but he prays; and this is invariably the case all the year round." – *The Heresy of a Human Priesthood*, by Mr. Beverley.

it is the Divine organisation of the Spirit, set forth in the Scriptures of truth, and not that of modern Churches, which is man's wretched device for preserving *order*; for he ever, naturally, prefers fleshly order to spiritual energy. These Christians may, however, bear thankful testimony to the sufficiency of the wisdom of God, in His word, and the needlessness of those devices which are based upon its supposed insufficiency; for they can, from the experience of many years, avouch that they have never witnessed more grave, and seemly, and holy *order*, than in assemblies of believers where there was no "*arrangement*;" not the cold and lifeless order of the flesh, but that which alone God values, even the holy order of grace.

Again, he says, in reference to teaching in the Church, or addressing the body, "the Brethren" hold, that "it should be left to the moving of the Spirit on the heart of the individual at the moment." Now, this assertion proves him to be as little acquainted with their judgment and practice in this matter, as with the teaching of Scripture, upon which they are founded. He can see no medium between waiting for, and acting under the "arrangement," or appointment of man, to minister exclusively in a Christian Church, and waiting for some special movement or impulse of the Spirit at the particular time. He confounds gifts bestowed, habitually possessed, and to be seasonably exercised, with the notion which obtains amongst the Quakers, of the necessity of present impulses and motions; a notion no where countenanced by Scripture, and which has left the great majority of their congregations without any ministry at all. The Christians whom this writer assails do, however, look for the guidance, controul {sic}, and energy of the blessed Spirit of God, to enable them to exercise aright those gifts which He may have conferred upon them, and to preserve them from mingling the mere wisdom or imaginings of the flesh, with the precious truth of God. This is very different from the motions and impulses above mentioned; and if Dissenters do not look for the same, their frequent prayers for the aid and guidance of the Spirit are but solemn mockeries.

When their accuser asserts, that the "fundamental tenet" of the "Brethren" is the same as that of the Quakers, is it in ignorance of the fact, that they (the Quakers) maintain on the subject of ministry, not only the necessity of the moving of the Spirit before they teach or exhort; but also that the spirit in their teachers is a spirit of *revelation*, so that their word is paramount to the written word of God, {501} and takes precedence of it, as being subsequent in order of time?\* And is he ignorant also, that the "Brethren" judge this to be a monstrous and destructive error, and hold that *all teaching* is to be tried by the Scriptures of truth?

I shall now close my observations on this head, by a few quotations from some of the writings of the "Brethren" on the subject of ministry. The first passage which I give is extracted from a paper entitled, "Open Communion and Liberty of Ministry." The author thus writes on the latter subject: – "By this [liberty of ministry] is intended to be understood permission to each believer to speak in the Church, when it is met together *as a Church* for the worship of God, *provided he be able to speak to the edification of the body*" (p. 8). I give the next extract from a Tract, entitled "Answers to Sixteen Questions, by a Clergyman," &c. Ques. "Since you lay claim to a Pentecostal ministry, why do you

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\* So that theirs is, properly speaking, neither ministry *in* the word, nor *according to* the word. So entirely have they set aside the Scriptures, especially in this matter, that in the majority of the comparatively few congregations in which they have ministry, it is, contrary to the most express precepts of the word of God, that of females (see 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35; 1 Tim. ii. 11, 12). I speak here of the system and its tenets; but I know there are very many individuals in it who value as they ought, and have right thoughts about the Scriptures.

not go as far as the Irvingites, and lay claim to all the Pentecostal gifts?” Ans. “If by a ‘Pentecostal ministry,’ be intended a ministry accompanied and enforced by the power of working miracles, speaking with tongues, &c., we do not lay claim to this. But we do lay claim to some at least of those *gifts*, with which the Spirit that descended on the day of Pentecost endowed the Church, ‘for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ;’ even ‘the word of wisdom,’ ‘the word of knowledge,’ &c. for ‘there are diversities of *gifts*, but the same Spirit.’”

The following passages are quotations from sundry papers in the *Christian Witness*. – “All *are not qualified for teachers*, or church office; but all are qualified to minister to the Lord, in ministering one to another,” &c. (vol. i. p. 3). – “There should be no hindrance to any to speak, – ‘If any speak,’ – provided, in the judgment of the Church, it be in the Spirit,† ‘unto edification,’ and not in the flesh” (ib. p. 10, 11). Again, “For the rest [that is, all except women], they were all to speak, that all might learn, and all might be comforted. Not all to speak at once, nor all to speak every day, but all as God led them, according to the order there laid down (1 Cor. xiv.), and as God was pleased *to give them ability*, for the edifying of the Church. I apply all this simply and exclusively to the question of Christians in general, having God’s Spirit, and using *their respective gifts*.” Again, “And which (1 Cor. xiv.) implies directly, not that it is right for every man to speak, but that there was preclusion of none, because of their not being in a stated office. Women were the precluded class; *there* the line was drawn. If men had not *the gift of speaking*, of course they would be silent, if they followed the directions given” (ib. p. 164). Again, “Aptness to teach may be a very important qualification for a bishop; but it cannot be said, *from Scripture*, to be disorderly for any member to speak in the Church, if God have given him *ability*” (ib. p. 165). – “The not seeing this, and confounding these gifts in men with the Holy Ghost, has led to much and mischievous confusion. The Holy Ghost himself dwelling in the individual, and, above all, in the unity of the body, guides, directs, and orders, *by the Word*, the use of these manifestations of His power in man; ... I repeat, *by the Word*, just as the conduct of one *led of the Spirit*, is ordered and guided by the Word, the power of the same Spirit directing and applying it” (vol. vi. p. 258). “*It is not that they* (prophets, in the subordinate sense), *now reveal fresh truths not contained in the Word, or the foundation would not have been completely laid*. This, I hold, never can be touched” (ib. p. 274). – “They are gifts to the Church, not *to* all, but *for* all. The development of these in full liberty and openness of ministry is most important; nor can they be really or rightly developed otherwise” (ib. p. 277).

In these passages, we can discern no traces of this notion of the necessity of some {502} present special moving or impulse of the Spirit on the heart of the individual before he speaks in the church. The doctrine they teach differs as much from this, on the one hand, as from the notion of a mere college-prepared ministry on the other. In these extracts, and in the works from which they are taken, throughout, we always read of men *qualified* by God, of *ability* bestowed by God, of *gifts* received from God, gifts habitually possessed by those members of the body upon whom they are conferred, and to be habitually used and exercised according to the Spirit, which will always be seasonably and unto edification, and not according to the flesh, which would ever be unseasonably, and merely for display.

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† That is, according to, and under the guidance and governance of, the Spirit (see the same and similar expressions as to the Christian’s standing and conduct (Rom. viii. 1, 9, 14; Gal. v. 16–18).

It would be easy, were it needful, to multiply quotations to the same effect, but I refrain, and shall merely add two more brief, but most important passages on the subject generally of the exercise of gifts in the Church. The first is as follows: – “It is a part of this responsibility and reference to the Head of the Church, not to quench the Spirit, nor despise prophesyings, be they the simplest, or the humblest, in the church, as to mere circumstances, if God be pleased to use them” (*Christian Witness*, vol. vi., p. 259). The next is as follows: “The inconveniences to be apprehended from giving freedom to the Spirit of God to act, are nothing to be compared to the positive evil of shutting him out by a fleshly order; it may be that people love to have it so, but it necessarily blinds to the real state of spiritual destitution” (vol. i., p. 9).\*

Art. II. (p. 576). In the next article of this creed is the following statement: – “It (a church) may likewise permit an individual to give notice that he will preach the gospel at such a time, and in such a place, ‘to the world,’ meaning thereby, any body who comes, and who are counted as the world, even though nine-tenths are true believers.” Now it is actually true, that these Brethren think it a godly service to testify at appointed times to “the world” of the gospel of the grace of God; and should it so happen, upon such an occasion, the majority (nine-tenths, if the writer please) should be believers, yet they feel that the souls of the remaining tenth are of sufficient value to forbid an alteration of their purpose to make this blessed gospel the subject-matter of their testimony. This true, but sarcastic, statement, ill accords with the previous insinuation (p. 575), that these Christians are not very anxious to proselytise souls to Christ. But in this article there is another assertion, namely, that “if they assemble *as* believers, this (the notice that one will speak) is no longer lawful. The Spirit must then be left free.” As a sufficient reply to this, I shall give an extract from a tract already referred to,† merely, in order to shew the credit to which the gratuitous statements of this writer are entitled. “In the case of *teaching*, also, it may be very desirable for any one who is able to instruct the *Church*, by unfolding scripture, and leading them into deeper apprehension of truth, to collect *believers* in assemblies in which he may be the *sole* speaker, either because he may be the only one able to teach, or else because sufficient time would not otherwise be afforded” (p. 24). I would just add, that this is the frequent practice of these Christians.

Art. IV. These Christian Brethren do not hold, as here stated, that the Church ought to break bread, in remembrance of the Lord, “*every time* it meets,” but that it ought to meet specially for that purpose once every Lord’s-day (Acts xx).

Art. V. & VI. The Brethren are here represented as holding it to be “unlawful”‡ to “educate any one as a minister of religion.” As to this, I would merely say, that they have no law upon the subject, it being a thing which, I suppose, would never occur to their minds, believing, as they do, that “aptitude to teach” is {503} a gift received from God, and that it does not depend upon our own will, however pious, nor upon the will of others.

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\* The papers in the *Christian Witness* here quoted are entitled thus: – “On Christian Ministry,” vol. i. p. 1; “Christian Liberty of Preaching and Teaching the Lord Jesus Christ,” vol. i. p. 161; “Operations of the Spirit of God,” Part III. vol. vi. p. 231. The two former, if not the last also, are published in the form of tracts.

† “Open Communion and Liberty of Ministry.”

‡ This word “*unlawful*” frequently occurs in these articles. It is, however, a term seldom used or heard amongst “the Brethren;” and perhaps this writer is not aware that it is not once used in the New Testament in reference to Christian conduct. Obedience to the divine precepts and doctrines is there placed upon quite a different and far more blessed footing than that of *law* (see Rom. vi. 14; xii. 1, &c.; Eph. vi. 1, &c.; Phil. ii. 1, &c.), believers not being *now* treated as mere servants, but as sons (Gal. iv. 1–7).

They do also hold that this may be *increased* (not *gained*, as here stated), not by "the *natural* exercise of the mind, in philology, in history, in science, in literature, and criticism,"\* but "by prayer (Acts vi. 4), meditation (1 Tim. iv. 15), and study of the Bible alone,† without note or comment" (1 Tim. iv. 13, and 2 Tim. ii. 15; iii. 16, 17). I would add that, while the "Brethren" have neither time nor inclination to seek for all this varied literature, and feel that they could not do so to the glory of God, yet a knowledge of the original languages of the sacred Scriptures is valued and cultivated by them.

Art. VII. Represents the "Brethren" as holding that, "the law of Moses is not our rule of life *in any sense whatever.*" A single extract from a tract already referred to will be a sufficient answer to this statement. It is as follows: – "One may ask those who are so zealous for the law as '*our rule of life,*' what they mean by this expression? Do they mean that it is our *sole* rule of life? If so, they set aside all the moral teaching of the Lord and his apostles as superfluous. *We*, however, believe that the Lord never, either in person, or by his apostles, spoke in vain. But do they merely mean that it is *a* rule of life? If so, why not thus express themselves, and every godly man will agree with them? We assuredly believe that every *moral* duty set forth in it is of eternal obligation, and that what is *morally* good or evil before God, is unchangeably so, for *He* is unchangeable. Those who do not really believe that we deny the moral guilt of idolatry, murder, lust, &c., *act very*

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\* The various branches of knowledge may be very useful to enable a man to preach *himself*, but are in no wise needful to enable him to preach or teach *Christ*: and one may search in vain for a single scripture asserting the necessity of them, though the "Brethren" are here taunted with holding them to be needless. Nay, there are sundry passages even condemnatory of such things; as "excellency of speech or of wisdom," "enticing words of man's wisdom," (philology, rhetoric, &c.) "oppositions of science," "doting about questions and strifes of words," &c. But the scriptures are numerous and at hand which declare the sufficiency of prayer, meditation, and reading the Word. It is notorious that mere literature has never done any thing but mischief in the Church, removing men from the simplicity that is in Christ. As literature advanced and prevailed, the truth became darkened, diluted, and mixed with pernicious errors, until at length it was well nigh extinguished. To the *learned* we may trace almost every heresy and false doctrine which has at any time plagued or desolated the Church; and if we desire to see infidelity raging under the Christian name, we must turn our eyes to the neologians of Germany, who are, admittedly, in philology, mere criticism, and literature, *facile principes*. And yet the religionists, especially the dissenters, of these countries have failed to take warning from this; and may we not detect the latent germ of neology in their present almost idolatrous exaltation of human learning? When we hear one of their great men (Dr. Leifchild), after defining knowledge to be, "the result of the mind's exercise of *its own powers* in acquiring the ideas of others, and increasing and maturing its own," go on to say, "Once intermit this habit, and suspend the progress of acquisition, and *the respectability of your ministry is undermined*, you will become a borrower from yourself, and be esteemed stationary, while all *the world* around you is on the advance." To which his reviewer in the *Congregational Magazine*, adds, "We are sure that the rising ministry will not be able to maintain their respectability and usefulness in society, unless they are known to be in advance of the intelligence of the age." May we not well warn them to beware, and tell them that it is the way of God to confound "the *wisdom* of this world," and "to take the wise in their own craftiness?" And when we find him (Dr. Leifchild) adding, "What in that case can preserve the charm of your ministry for any *worthy class of hearers*?" May we not say, Alas for the poor and simple, whom it was the way of the blessed Lord, and should be ours, to preach unto and to teach! (see *The Inquirer* for May). "After that in the *wisdom of God* the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the *foolishness of preaching* to save them that *believe.*"

† If the Bible alone is not sufficient for the modern teacher, it must be because his object is to minister something besides those things for which the Scriptures are declared to be "profitable," namely, "doctrine, reproofs, correction, and instruction in righteousness; *that the man of God* (i. e. the teacher) *may be perfect*, thoroughly furnished unto every good work." But it seems that such perfection is not enough for modern teachers. As to the use of commentaries and other books, every one of the "Brethren" is as much at liberty to use his own judgment as this writer.



wickedly in saying or implying (as this question does) that we do" (*Answers to Questions by a Clergyman, &c.*, p. 33).

{504} This writer adds here that "accordingly the observance of the Sabbath or seventh day is binding upon no Christian." I hope for his own sake he is either of the same opinion, or else observes the *seventh* day (Ro. xiv. 22, 23; James iv. 17). He says, also, in a note, "We believe 'the Brethren' are unanimous on this subject." The following is extracted from the tract just mentioned: – "Upon the question whether the first day of the week is now a Sabbath, we are not, I believe, *unanimous*: but we are so, in gladly and thankfully devoting that day to worship, and spiritual things" (p. 48). See Ro. xiv. 5, 6; Col. ii. 16, 17.

Art. XI. XVI. and XVII (p. 577). – The "Brethren" neither pretend to the gift of "prophecy" as here *insinuated*, (for the writer, adventurous as he is, does not venture to *assert*\* it), nor to that of the "discernment of spirits." From his observations in the latter article it is evident that he is ignorant of the very meaning of the last mentioned gift.

Art. XII. – The "Brethren" frequently take the judgment of the assembled Church on many subjects, though they are here said to hold it unlawful. They find no difficulty in doing this without putting the matter to the vote.

Art. XIV states that they hold "all *rule* to be in the few, because the Spirit is eminently in the few." Had he said, because gift and qualification for rule are ever in a few, he would have been nearer the truth.

Art. XV. – They do indeed hold, as here alleged, that it is unscriptural, and, therefore, presumptuous for a Church to choose its ministers. Those who are qualified by the Lord it is bound to acknowledge. It is also true that democracy, especially in the Church, if not always "of Satan," is, at least, always of the flesh. Democracy means rule or government by the people; and I would ask this writer, if in the passage, "Obey them that have the rule over you," and others of the like nature, the *rulers* were the people, and if so, who were the *ruled*?

Art. XVIII. – The "Brethren" do, indeed, judge that "to *separate from evil* is our first duty," and that the text here quoted, "Cease to do evil," &c., would alone be sufficient warrant for this, if, indeed, one "led of the Spirit," required to be taught so self-evident a truth. They think, also, that they should pursue this course, even though it should lead to "absolute isolation." "It is the way of faith," says this writer sarcastically. Surely it was the way of those of old, who "received a good report through faith." But I fear from his tone here, and throughout, that Abraham, Moses, &c., (see Heb. xi.) must appear to *him* to have been very weak and foolish men; though it is written, that *God* "was not ashamed to be called *their God*," and that of them "the world was not worthy."†

Art. XIX.–XXII. – The boldness of some of the statements in these articles is indeed startling. The "Brethren" are here said to hold that "every person claiming admission into a Church, must be received *if he be a partaker of the Spirit*, BE HIS OPINIONS WHAT THEY MAY." Their accuser, however, presently contradicts this most unfounded assertion by a true one; namely, "The wise and eminently spiritual [he might have said *any believer*], may detect that a person is not a partaker of the Spirit *by some deficiency in the articles*

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\* I say "assert," for all is assertion with this writer, who does not favour us with a single proof of any one of his statements. He, of course, here means prophecy in the sense of prediction. As to the more extended sense of it, in which also it is doubtless used in Scripture, see *Christian Witness*, vol. v. p. 274.

† An expression occurs, between inverted commas, in this place and elsewhere, namely, "chaining the Spirit," which I have never heard uttered by these Christians, nor seen in their writings, and which I feel to be both unseemly and incorrect.

of his creed; even though (judging by moral tests alone) they would have mistaken him for a brother in Christ."‡ Thus, first a person may be a partaker of the Spirit, *be his opinions what they may*; and next, he may be proved not to have the Spirit, *by a defect in his creed!*

{505} There are, also, two other statements here, which consist as little with the first of the above assertions, as with truth. The first is that the "Brethren," hold that "to agree to differ\* is a base and carnal policy, a compromise with sin." The next is that they judge it "presumptuous to distinguish truths into *fundamental* and *non-fundamental*;" and that in the case of a claimant for admission into a Church, "Wisdom will be given to *the few* to judge of his character, but the sense of *the Church* must by no means be taken."

I shall now present to the reader a few extracts from the publications of the "Brethren," which will be a sufficient reply to all these statements, except that single one which has been pronounced true.

"There are two things which, though in reality as different as light and darkness, are commonly confounded: the one is *unanimity*; the other is mere *uniformity*. The former is a blessed and godly *reality*; the latter is a poor human *counterfeit*. The former is *free*, wrought by the mighty agency of the Spirit of God, through the word of God; the latter is *forced*, wrought by the fear of man, by Creeds, Catechisms, and Confessions – the drilling and discipline of the system or the sect. The former is of the *Spirit*; the latter of the *flesh*. In fine, the former is *God's* order; and can only exist at all amongst those who are taught of Him. The other is *man's* order, and may exist to any extent, even amongst the unconverted and ungodly."

"Now, the latter of these (*uniformity*) we not only do not pretend to, but believe the insisting upon it to be unscriptural and unrighteous, and the effect of it to be the dividing and scattering of the Lord's people. The system therefore that requires it is so far sectarian and schismatic. Such terms of communion were too hard for us: they ran counter to Scripture, and therefore to our consciences; we dare not, therefore, impose them upon others.

"The former (*unanimity*) we only require upon FOUNDATION TRUTHS – truths essential to discipleship – to life and godliness. This is the only true basis of communion. It calls upon disciples for nothing but what, *as disciples*, they must already believe. These terms are not too hard. If acted upon by the saints of God, the result would be the gathering together of *all*, without offence or defilement of conscience to *any*.

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‡ It will not, I suppose, be denied that we might often be deceived by moral tests alone in this matter. There are those, for example, whose moral conduct, amiable ways, and even manner of speaking at times of the Lord, and his words and works, would be quite sufficient to deceive one into a belief that they were disciples indeed; until, when further tested, it was found that they denied the essential divinity of our blessed Lord, and the vicariousness of his sufferings. The course is then plain. Though dressed in the garb of "angels of light," the anathema is upon them, and we are not to receive them into our house, or to bid them "God speed" (Gal. i. 8–9; 2 John 10.)

\* It is highly probable that this writer has heard this *expression* used, as it often is in a spirit of careless and unholy indifferentism, objected to by brethren. But has he, I would ask, ever heard them object to patient mutual forbearance in case of differences of judgment? The same objection may be justly made to the spirit and manner in which the expressions "fundamental," and "non-fundamental," though in themselves most correct, are too often used by high professors. If some point of holy conduct, or some branch of sanctifying knowledge, is pressed upon their conscience, or their attention, the answer is, Is it fundamental? Is it necessary to salvation? Questions arguing heartless ingratitude to the "Lord that bought them," and the servile feeling of one who is ignorant that the standing of a believer is that of a sinner already saved and redeemed through the precious blood of Christ; questions which mean, that whatever is not needful to save them from the wrath to come, is unworthy of attention.

"But, while requiring unanimity only thus far (which is not forcing the judgment of believers, but *simply requiring that they should be believers*), we are favoured, (blessed be God!) with a larger measure of it, upon the things of God generally, than those who are under articles and confessions framed with the avowed object of forcing it. And this will ever be the result of freely committing ourselves to the teaching of the Spirit by the word."†

I now give an extract from a Tract by another of the "Brethren:"‡ – "The terms '*free or open communion*,' are adopted to indicate the right of all who are known, or supposed, on the best evidence we can command, to be *sincere believers* in the Lord Jesus, to come to the table of the Lord, however different their degrees of faith and love, *however diverse their judgments upon many points*, which, however important in themselves, are yet not such as to prevent their being recognised by the Lord Jesus as His members" (Ro. xiv. 1–3; xv. 7).

In the "Answers to a Clergyman," already referred to, I find the following question {506} and answer. Q. "What are the Scripture terms of Communion, and who is to judge of the fitness of candidates?" – A. "We believe the Scripture terms of Communion to be a Confession of Faith in those truths, the belief of which constitutes a person a Christian, but without faith in which a person cannot be a Christian; and this (i. e. faith), manifested by a righteous walk. I deem it to be unscriptural and unrighteous, to require any to assent to particular opinions upon matters of 'doubtful disputation,' as a term of Communion (Rom. xiv. 1). This would be erecting a barrier to exclude the Saints, and thus to scatter the sheep of the fold." "It is for the Brethren already in Communion (compare the last-mentioned assertion of this writer) to decide, according to the above tests, upon the title of those who propose themselves for Communion." And again, "The only Scriptural basis of Communion is the requisition of unanimity upon truths essential to discipleship. This calls upon disciples for nothing but what, *as disciples*, they must already believe" (pages 8, 9, 45).

Art. XXVI. (p. 578.) – "To criticise" and amend the translation (of the Bible) is unlawful; but it must be done by the Spirit, and not by the laws of common Greek and Hebrew. This is rather unintelligible: "It is *unlawful*;" but "it *must be done*," &c. This writer seems again to contradict himself in his note, p. 581. In reply, however, to his statements here, I would merely refer the reader to the *Christian Witness* (vol. i. p. 313, 357, 424. vol. iv. p. 193, 355), where they will find many criticisms on the original text, *according to the laws of common Greek and Hebrew*.

Art. XXVII. – The "Brethren" are here said to hold, that "in the interpretation of prophecy, the *literal* meaning is alone admissible." The writer, however, thus answers himself on this point in p. 580. "In the prophets, Babylon, Egypt, Tyrus, Idumea, &c. must [according to the "Brethren"], by no means be explained of the ancient nations so called." ..... "Faith would at once see, that the names, Babylon, &c. must have a *spiritual*\* meaning." Which of these assertions is true? I answer, Neither. In a tract on prophecy by one of the "Brethren,"† I find the following passage: – "In order to remove all uncertainty, and all plausible pretext for unbelief, the great cardinal facts of prophecy are revealed in

† "Letter to the Author of an Address, &c. on Education, &c., and on Baptism{.}" Introduction.

‡ "On Open Communion and Liberty of Ministry." p. 5.

\* This writer, I presume, means "*figurative*;" for he will not, I suppose, deny that the true meaning of a passage, whether literal or figurative, is the *spiritual*.

† "Prophecies respecting the Jews and Jerusalem, in the form of a Catechism" (p. 10).

three ways. I. In simple language. II. In symbol. III. In *figurative* language." The tract goes on to state, that the restoration of Jerusalem is predicted *in these three ways*. In the first in Zech. xiv. 10.; in the second in Ezek. xxxvii. 1, 14.; in the third in Isa. li. 9.; and that "A LITERAL FACT is conveyed in each of these three predictions." This extract shews the value of the first of these statements, and the other shall be proved equally unfounded further on.

Art. XXVIII. – "The whole of the Mosaic law is typical [according to the "Brethren;"] none of the precepts are medical, nor political, nor given in concession to existing custom, nor with a view to keep the Jews distinct from other nations; but they are all types of Christ, and of the Gospel," &c. One is really weary of these bold statements, unsubstantiated by a single reference or proof; a circumstance which ought, to the unprejudiced, to be in itself a sufficient answer to them. The "Brethren," I am persuaded, hold that the Mosaic law was both moral, political, separative (Eph. ii. 14), and even concessionary (Mark x. 2, 9.); and I would ask, does this writer mean seriously to say, that the "Brethren" hold such laws as that about divorce, and as "eye for eye, and tooth for tooth," &c. to have been types of Christ, and the Gospel of *grace*? And will he, on the other hand, venture to say, that they err in holding the institutions of the law to have been largely, though not universally, typical of the things of Christ, while we have the direct testimony of such Scriptures as the Epistle to the Hebrews, *passim* (see especially chap. x. 1; Col. ii. 16, 17). &c. &c. to the fact? Or what Christians, one may ask, has he conversed with, who do not hold the same? As to any of the precepts of the law being "*medical*," I know of none. It was not amongst the objects of that economy to teach *medicine*. Neologically to explain the law of leprosy as a regulation of "quarantine," † or that of the avenger of blood, as an adopted Arab custom {507} (if that be what is intended here), does surely "argue a mind" *very*, if not "*utterly* dark as to things spiritual."

Art. XXIX. – The "Brethren" hold, in utter opposition to the statement here, that heresy consists, not "in adopting an interpretation or opinion not according to the mind of the Spirit,"\* but in the evil activity and restlessness of the flesh in using such views as an engine of division in a Christian church, to separate disciples gathered together *as such*: thus an Anti-millenarian, however he may be regarded as mistaken in judgment, may be

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† The law provided no remedy for leprosy, nor gave any directions whatever as to the means of healing it. The leper was shut up, and left to God. The priest was simply to {507} ascertain the disease by certain characters or symptoms, and, when God had healed it (see 2 Kings v. 7), ceremonially to cleanse the restored leper. As to the notion of quarantine, it does not appear that this disease was contagious at all; and I believe that diseases which continue, as this appears often to have done, for life, are never so. There were, however, similar ordinances for ceremonial cleansing in the case of issues, which, like the other, communicated uncleanness, but surely not disease (see Lev. xiii.–xv.).

\* If this were the case, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find a Christian innocent of heresy. Nay, inasmuch as no two could be found perfectly agreed in the interpretation of *all* scripture, every man must needs regard his brother, and be regarded by him, as a heretic. If one is known to reject a fundamental truth, or hold a fundamental error, believed to be such by any body of Christians, they must, of course, simply regard him as no disciple at all. I might, in like manner, say that if the next article were true, few would escape excommunication, the most solemn act a Church can perform. Suppose, for example, one is overtaken in a fault, it may be momentary impatience of temper, or a feeling of "emulation." Well, these are classed with "murders, drunkenness," &c., as "works of the flesh" (Gal. v.), and therefore "deserve excommunication," according to this writer's statement; but compare Gal. vi. 1 with Titus iii. 10, 11. In truth, I am ashamed of dwelling upon these puerilities, but may just add that the explanation of heresy which I have given above, was declared by more than one of the "Brethren," at a meeting of Christians assembled at Clifton in June 1838 (it being one of the subjects proposed for discussion), and appeared to be the unanimous judgment of all present, no difference of opinion being expressed.



a valued brother in the Lord, and abide in full communion with these Christians. I know there are such amongst them, as well as others who have as yet no decided judgment upon this doctrine; and when a Christian desires to join them in communion, he is never questioned as to his views upon the subject.

Art. XXX. – It is held by the "Brethren," as here alleged, that heresy (as they understand it), deserves excommunication, not, as this writer asserts, merely because it is "a work of the flesh," but because it is so written, and because it is such a work of the flesh, as is incompatible with the welfare, union, and peace of a Christian church (Tit. iii. 10, 11).

With respect to the various views and modes of conduct which, in the following eight articles (p. 579), are represented as being made matter of law by the "Brethren," I shall only observe, that every brother is left the fullest liberty to form his own judgment upon them, in the fear of the Lord, and to act accordingly. As to possessions, I would, however, notice, that known covetousness is not sanctioned by them any more than drunkenness, &c., and that they would not hold communion with one ascertained to be guilty of it. See 1 Cor. v. 11., a passage which, with the other testimonies of Scripture on this subject, I would commend to the serious self-searching attention of modern professors.

Art. XXXIX. XL. (p. 579). – We have already seen much of careless hardihood in this writer's statements, but perhaps those which I am now about to notice surpass them all. The first represents the "Brethren" as holding, that "no Christian ought to submit to bear sway in this world, for all the powers of the world are apostate from God, and in reality *appointed by, and under controul of the devil.*" And, again, that "When it is said that kings and governors are an ordinance of God, this is to be understood of His providence, not of His grace. He ordains them as He ordains banditti, earthquake, and pestilence." It is here in one sentence stated, that the "Brethren" hold the powers of this world to be "appointed by the devil;" and in the next, that they consider them an ordinance of "God's Providence!" With respect to the first assertion here, that a Christian should bear no sway in this world, it is, indeed, I believe, the unforced, yet almost universal judgment of the "Brethren." As to the others, however, were I to quote all the {508} passages in their writings which shew the utter falsity of them, and teach the directly opposite doctrine, I should extend this paper beyond all due limits. I shall, however, present the reader with a few of them.

And first, – "civil magistracy, for example, is a thing eagerly sought for by the world. *It is, in itself, a blessing, – a blessing from God; for there is no power but of God; 'the powers that be, are ordained of God'*" (*Christian Witness*, vol. iv. p. 253\*). – Again, – "Whilst we can truly say – *there is no power but of God; 'the powers that be are ordained of God;'* yet we can also say with equal truth, that power *unguarded by the laws of Christ*, is power perverted, and therefore unsuited for *His* servant to exercise." (*ib.* p. 262). Again, – "Thus, even Nero becomes to Paul the minister of God for good, though Paul was not the executor of Nero's laws. *The giver and the gift are good*, and though they who receive it *may* use it only to promote their own selfish ends, yet even *their* use of it may and will produce a result of blessing, *far from being despised* by those, who desire not to 'strive nor to cry,' but to 'lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty'" (p. 263). Again, – "In the world, on the contrary, there is *God's order of civil government*, and *respect is due to it*, totally independent of the character of the person;

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\* This paper is thus entitled, "*Is the exercise of worldly authority consistent with discipleship?*" It is also published as a tract, and I would earnestly commend it to the attention of the *Christian* reader.



‘the powers that be are ordained of God’” (*ib.* vol. i. p. 8). And – “Surely the *possibility of the thought that the Christian was free from the authorities of the world, must have led to the oft-repeated precepts with regard to submission*” (*ib.* vol. v. 244).

The following I quote from the “Answers to Questions by a Clergyman:” – Question “What grounds have you for asserting that the magistrate is the Devil’s minister, and that it is unlawful for a Christian to hold office in the state, or to seek for legal protection?”

Answer. “We are here called upon to give our grounds for an opinion which we assuredly believe to be most *unscriptural and ungodly.*” &c. “We maintain that the magistrate is not ‘the devil’s minister,’ but the minister and ordinance of God, to whom we are to be subject, ‘not only for wrath, but also for conscience’ sake.’ (Rom. xiii. 1–6; 1 Pet. ii. 13–17). ‘For conscience’ sake,’ therefore, we abstain even from things which might not provoke the *wrath* of the powers that be; for example, framing and *presenting, under the name of petitions, angry remonstrances to our rulers.* As to the other opinions included in this question, – seeing that (whatever may be the views of individuals) we do not maintain or insist upon them *as a body*; we need not be careful to give an answer” (p. 4).

Again, “There should be *but one limit* to our obedience to the ‘powers that be.’ If they call upon us *to disobey God,* we must refuse (Acts iv. 19). Power is *committed* to them; but it *belongeth* to God.’ He *in* whom power is inherent, and *by* whom kings reign, must be first obeyed, We must indeed, ‘honour the king;’ but we must also (and first) ‘fear God.’ It is not, however, our business, and is contrary to our calling as saints, to canvass the moral rectitude of our rulers† in their exercise of power ..... We are not to *judge* the ‘powers that be,’ but to *obey* them, – to ‘be subject to every ordinance of man *for the Lord’s sake.*” The man of God may indeed press upon the consciences of rulers their responsibility toward God (Acts xxiv. 25): but he may not hold them responsible to himself. The use of their power is a question between them and God; and who may usurp his prerogative? Again, “As to holding office in the state, if by this he meant holding *power,* Christians are no where told *in Scripture* to be imitators of the power of God; but they are desired to be imitators of His grace” (Eph. v. 1.; Mat. v. 44, 45.) See also the express precept, Mat. xx. 25, 26 (p. 28, 29).

This writer, however, not content with assailing the “Brethren” generally, has {509} thought fit to single out an individual by name, and to impute the ungodly opinions on the subject of magistracy, already ascribed to them, in a special manner to him. Of this individual, and his writings, he thus speaks (p. 589), “Then (as may be seen fully set forth in Mr. P. F. Hall’s book, entitled ‘*Discipleship,*’) they explain away the Apostolic declaration that Magistracy is an ordinance of God, into the empty notion that all the events of Providence are ordered by Him, as are tempests and earthquakes. Thus, *the sceptre of Queen Victoria, and the pistol of a piratical chief are made equally respectable.*” Again, “He believes (as we all believe,) that God regulates and controls the devil’s acts, and the acts of evil men; but he teaches that magistracy is no more of God than piracy is: and his only reason for obeying the magistrate (as far as he can find) is, because he ought not to resist evil.” And, lastly, “Some persons might imagine (with Mr. Hall), that the ‘powers which *be,*’ are of Satan, and only the ‘powers which *shall be*’ of God.”

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† As *holders* of power, they are the ordinance of God; though in their *use* of power they *may* be the servants of the devil. Such was Nero. And yet it was under his reign that these precepts of unqualified obedience were given. The most fearful and ungodly exercise of power since the world began, was the crucifixion of the Lord of Glory. But Jesus said to Pilate, “Thou couldst have no power against me, except it were given thee from above.” “When he suffered, he threatened not,” and “He hath left us an example that we should follow his steps” (1 Pet. ii. 21–23).

In reference to these startling statements, I shall simply, by giving a single extract from his work, allow Mr. Hall to speak for himself. In page 42, of "*Discipleship*," he thus writes: "As a disciple of Jesus, my power, if I have any, must be *from Him*, and by the Holy Ghost. But while I say this, I would be understood as not speaking evil of dignities, but as *most distinctly* and reverently acknowledging 'the powers that be,' to be 'ordained of God,' *even as anointed of the Lord*; and most humbly would I submit to them, in all things where their vested authority reaches;\* and, may God in His mercy, guard me from the evil spirit of insubordination now so prevalent on all sides. I do believe, even as the word teaches, that kings and magistrates *rule by the power and grace of God*, and not of the people, – that *all power is of God*."†

There are many statements here (p. 580), upon which I shall not dwell, but just briefly notice them. As to joining Societies, I would refer the reader to a paper entitled, "Religious Societies" in the Christian Witness (vol. iv. p. 86), published also as a Tract. As to the world being "too bad to be mended by regulations," I believe with the "Brethren," that it is a solemn truth. So thought the Lord, "Now is the judgment of this world," &c. &c. They believe also that as the world *was*, so it *is*; – the same, in principle, that crucified the Lord of glory, and would do so again; nay, that many (O how many!) of the "religious world" would as before, so now again, be foremost in the cry, "Crucify him! crucify him!" for they were his greatest enemies – they could not endure the terrible brightness, the moral majesty, of that light which exposed their worldliness, and covetousness, and shallow hypocrisy, and man-pleasing religion. They (the "Brethren") believe also that, Eph. ii. 2, 3; iv. 18, 19; Tit. iii. 3, &c. &c., describe this world with as fearful accuracy now as in the days of Paul; and likewise that, "As it was in the days of Noah, *so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man*." The word will be true of the Church, even to the end, and "we know that *we* are of God, and *the whole world lieth in wickedness*" (or "the wicked one").

They believe also, as this writer here says, that they "should do good in detail, by preaching the gospel,‡ feeding the hungry, and tending the sick." So thought our blessed Lord, and so He acted. He formed no societies, neither joined any; but "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: *for God was with him*" (Acts x. 38).

As to the statements here, that the "Brethren" hold that "no part of the Apo- 510calypse is yet fulfilled," &c. this writer may, if he please, procure a work,\* lately written by a highly esteemed brother, in which he maintains that very many of the predictions of this book are accomplished, and, if I mistake not, that the three years and a half embrace a period of 1260 years, according to the ordinary view, viz., that days are put for years.

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\* In a note the author declares the limit of this authority, namely that it does not extend to spiritual things. This is the only limitation or qualification in his work, except the case of being called upon to disobey Christ. I suppose *dissenters* will not object to this, as it is the ground they profess to take. But see Mr. Hall's note, "Discipleship," p. 51. I quote from the first edition, not having the other, which is, I believe, an exact reprint.

† I could easily multiply extracts to the same effect, but must refer to the work itself; see especially from page 36 to 57. I would here observe that this and all the other publications quoted or referred to in this paper may be had at the Tract Depôts, I Warwick-square, London; and Cornwall-street, Plymouth, &c.

‡ And yet in p. 575, it is more than insinuated that these Christians are very careless about bringing souls to Christ.

\* "Notes on the Revelations, by J. N. Darby." I believe that many experienced brethren differ much in judgment as to many of the prophetic views in this work of their valued brother.

As to the Psalms, the "Brethren" do indeed generally hold that many, if not all of them, "are to be understood spiritually" (and *literally too*) "of Christ and Antichrist, and Israel restored, or about to be restored, to his own land;" and this without losing aught of the value, instruction, or comfort, in self-application, of the holy principles contained in them. With respect to the Proverbs, &c. I have never heard, and know nothing of the interpretations here mentioned, save, indeed, that "wisdom" sometimes means Christ (see Lu. vii. 35; xi. 49; also 1 Cor. i. 24).

Art. L. As to the assertion here, that the "Brethren" insist that Babylon, Egypt, Tyrus, Idumea, &c. must by no means be explained of the ancient nations so called;" and also, that "Faith would at once see that the names, Babylon, &c. must have a †*spiritual* interpretation;" I would simply refer the reader to two papers in the "Christian Witness," (vol. iii. p. 277, and iv. p. 101), in which the writer strongly maintains that they are to be taken *literally*; while the author of "Answers to a Clergyman," and others of the "Brethren," suppose the Babylon of the Apocalypse to be *figurative*‡ (p. 31).

I have not noticed the last of these multitudinous articles which have been framed for the "Plymouth Brethren," but, before closing, would make some remarks upon the long and incoherent *tirade* with which this writer winds up his paper.

And first, he thus (p. 582), as inconsistently as unwittingly, discloses one great secret of his hostility towards these Christians: "Without being *ostensibly* politicians," he says, "they have a strong sympathy with *ultra-toryism*, not a little quickened by recent reforms; the suspicion will enter, that a hatred of *popular liberty* bore no small share in the formation of their system." Who but this writer himself could see any connection between these things? Now, what is *ultra-toryism*? Is it not the extreme reverse of radicalism? And is not the latter term the name of restless insubordination to the "powers that be," while the former is expressive of subjection to them, and principles conservative of them? But it is a small thing with this writer to accuse the same persons of teaching that the "powers that be" are appointed by the *devil*; of libelling, condemning, and affronting magistracy; of equalising the royal sceptre and the pistol of the bandit; and of supporting "political oppression" and "strengthening despotism," – that is, of the extreme of radicalism and *ultra-toryism* at the same time!

It is very evident that this writer, who, *for the occasion*, is so zealous for magistracy and the "powers that be," would have no quarrel with the "Brethren" on this head, were they *radical politicians*, seeking, by organised confederacies with infidels and ungodly men, to intimidate their rulers into concessions of what they might please to call their civil rights and liberties. It is very clear that the real ground of his anger against them is, not that they are not *peaceable subjects* (for if unresisting submission to their rulers, and prayer for their welfare, entitle them to be so called, they possess this title), but that they are not *insubordinate citizens*, raising the cry of civil liberty and religious equality; and

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† It would require more ingenuity perhaps than this writer possesses, to harmonise this statement with that in page 578; viz. that the "Brethren" hold that "in the interpretation of prophecy, the *literal* meaning is alone admissible." Were truth and the glory of God the objects of this writer in his strictures upon the views of the "Brethren?" I fear not. In addition to what has been already said upon Art. xxviii. I would here give a short extract from the Notes on the Revelations, above mentioned. "The application of symbols *literally* seems to me to be very false in principle, and a very unsuitable mode of interpretation. It is *the denial that they are symbols*," (p. 39.)

‡ Such differences, though a cause of humiliation, negative, at least, the idea of the grievous bondage under which this writer would fain represent the "Brethren" as being, with regard to the interpretation of Scripture.

strange it is that those who, more perhaps than any other Christians, desire to be “quiet in the land,” and to inculcate and {511} practice submission to the authorities placed over them, should be repeatedly charged with despising this ordinance of God, and this by those very religionists who are distinguished for insubjection, except *so far as the measures of their rulers please them*, and are strenuous in their efforts to disturb and overturn the settled institutions of the nation. But I would tell this writer, and all who think with him, that this is not the subjection which the “Brethren” have been taught by the scriptures of truth; but that, while they would with thankfulness of heart acknowledge the mildness of the rule under which the providence of God has placed them, they have learned there a lesson which this writer confesses he understands not,\* namely, that they should be subject even to a “cut-throat,” if, by God’s permission, their ruler, “for *conscience*’ sake,” as well as (nay, rather than) “for *wrath*,” for, in obeying this ordinance, it is with the Lord *they* have to do, and not with man; “submit yourselves to every ordinance of man *for the Lord’s sake*.”

With respect to the assertion (p. 583), that, according to the “Brethren,” churches, societies, universities, political protestants, radicals, &c., are “all bad” (the writer has, with unusual consistency, left out tories in his enumeration here), I have nothing to say, as this simply amounts to what has been already admitted to be their judgment, namely, that *the world* is bad, too bad to be “mended by regulations.” As to the triple paradox here, I suppose that if either a hypocritical profession of Christianity (and that of any nation is, and must be so, under the present dispensation – Acts xv. 14), or a profession of infidelity, or no profession of religion at all, even in the case of an individual, is a cause of sorrow to the “merciful man,” it is much more so in the case of a nation. The Lord and his apostles passed through this world mourning over all these forms of evil,† and so should we. It is not that this state of things *disappoints* those whose expectations are all based upon the word of God, and who are not looking to see a world evangelised by man’s efforts before the Lord comes; but it is that they have not hearts of stone, and are not too “*wise*” to “meddle with this sorrow:” besides, they are ever reminded by these evils, that the time is not yet arrived, when “the Son of Man shall gather *out of his kingdom* all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;” and when, “at the name of Jesus,

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\* His words are, “He (Paul) alleges that the Christian must needs be subject ‘not only for wrath, but also for conscience’ sake;’ whereas it is evident that we are subject to a cut-throat *solely* ‘for wrath,’ and not also ‘for conscience’ sake.’ And yet he had just before described magistracy in the days of Paul as ‘established by violence and injustice, supported by force, and *constantly applied to wicked purposes*.’” When, notwithstanding this, we find this writer accusing the “Brethren” of “supporting political oppression” and “strengthening despotism” (that is, by silent *submission*), may we not fairly ask, How he and modern Dissenters would have acted in the days of Nero, when this scripture (Rom. xiii.) was written? and whether it is not now the sword of wrath alone that keeps them within bounds?

It is gravely added here that Rom. xiii. “was written precisely against the very error which he (Mr. Hall) and all his party hold.” If by this be intended the wicked fiction that power is of the Devil, this scripture surely meets that; but as the doctrine the “Brethren” really hold is that of respectful subjection, which the believer is there taught, they can with great quietness of spirit read that portion of the word themselves, and with great boldness press it upon the consciences of politico-religious Dissenters.

† As to the Apostle’s ever looking at “the bright side of the picture,” see Rom. i.–iii.; Acts xx. 29, &c.; 1 Tim. iv.; 2 Tim. iii.; Eph. iv. 17–19; and for the rest, see 2 Pet. ii. and Jude.

*every knee shall bow,*" &c., and "*every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father.*"‡

{512} If this writer cannot understand (p. 548) the possibility of saints being in an apostate *system*, I know not how to help him. I suppose he would admit that there are very many such in the establishment, and yet, if he does not regard that system as apostate he is guilty of sin in not living within its pale. If he does, I suppose it is not merely in the ungodliness of individuals that the apostasy consists, and therefore, that it would not be removed were even all its members saints. As to his illustration of the province in rebellion, &c., daily experience, and the very confessions of this writer, too sadly prove that there may be much disloyalty even in the saints, of whom there are doubtless many in "modern dissenting churches." But it is well for us that it is with a God of patient grace we have to do.

This writer again recurs (p. 585) to the subject of unanimity. He speaks of the "Brethren's" unreasonable hankering after it, and tells us it is "a thing by no means to be desired!" "How shallow," he says, "is that philosophy, or that religion, which *desires* uniformity in *this world*." The reason he then gives would apply just as well to the *next world*, as to this. And what does the reader think is this reason? Why, that it would *cost too much*. "It could not be attained without sacrificing all individuality of character, all peculiarity of education and experience." It is true there are many earnest exhortations in the word of God, to seek and follow after it (see Phil. i. 27; ii. 2; iii. 15; 2 Cor. xiii. 11; 1 Pet. iii. 8, &c.), and that it is there represented as a great blessing. But these are by no means to be regarded, seeing that it would involve the sacrifice of those very things which God has graciously given His word, and imparted His Spirit, to subdue; and by subduing to assimilate the hearts and minds, the thoughts, feelings, and desires, of all the children of His family. But he next proceeds to state, philosophically, many of the positive *advantages* of want of unanimity, and thus winds them up; – "humility must be taught by the *consciousness* of error," [I hope he does not mean that we are consciously to *abide* in error, in order to learn humility,] "the feebleness, too, of the human judgment must be displayed, by *permanent and irreconcilable* differences, Are we to break our hearts about this?" ..... "We are living," he continues, "amidst grand realities; it is a question of *the world* or *Christ*, irreligion or religion, death or life. We have no tears to spare for the

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‡ It might not be so easy to reconcile some of the paradoxes of this writer. For example, the "Brethren" are despisers of "the powers that be," and yet "ultra-Tories and supporters of all political oppression;" they hold that in the interpretations of the prophets "*the literal meaning is alone admissible*," and yet that the Babylon, Egypt, Tyrus, Idumea, of prophecy, "*are only to be understood spiritually*," the literal meaning being inadmissible. They hold it "unlawful to criticise or amend the translation of the Scriptures according to the laws [grammar] of common Greek and Latin;" and yet are intolerably critical, and suppose that "valuable truths are hidden in *grammatical* and verbal changes." They hold that a person, "*if he is a partaker of the Spirit*," must be received into the church, "*be his opinions what they may*," and then it may be discovered by his opinions that he is not "*a* {512} *partaker of the Spirit at all*." They hold that it is "unlawful to lay down *any creed* as a test of communion or a test for ministers," and yet that "*to agree to differ* is a base and carnal policy, a compromise with sin." They hold that we should "preach the gospel, feed the hungry, tend the sick," and yet that "a philanthropist can scarcely be a Christian." Their churches are asylums for the aristocracy, who, driven from the establishment, "cannot endure the democracy of the voluntary system;" and yet the aristocrat, when he enters them, is no longer "to recognise superiority in himself, and all judgment and *rule* is in the spiritual few." They are "*devotedly pious*," and yet hold very *wicked doctrines* (he says nothing of *evil works*), and "are likely to be chiefly signal as *firebrands in the Christian world!*" To these might be added many more; but I forbear.



absence or presence of a pulpit; for pews, or no pews;\* nor for numerous doctrinal questions of far greater importance. It is practically impossible to make much of *secondary* matters without making less of what is *vital*." Strange that this writer, so occupied with these great realities, could have found time to "watch the rise and progress of the *views*" of the "Plymouth Brethren" with such "*deep and anxious interest*;" strange that he should have had leisure to form so detailed a digest of those views, and all of them secondary, as he has here presented to us, *professedly* drawn from their various publications! But, in very truth, were it not a subject far too solemn, all this would provoke a smile. What! those who can speak long and loudly about worldly literature, and earthly politics, and modes of earthly aggrandisement; whose very periodicals, called religious, teem with such things, and greater trifles still, † have {513} neither time, nor tears, for important, even though not vital doctrines, which God in His grace and wisdom has seen fit to reveal for his people's guidance, in passing through this evil world; so occupied are they about the great question of "*Christ or the world!*" so occupied as not to have time tremblingly to examine what the principles of Christ and the world are, or to reject and disown the latter when discovered! Occupied, indeed, they are; but I fear much, it is about other questions than this; I speak of modern Dissenters on the whole, (believing that there are many blessed exceptions) for never could this great question operate to the neglect of searching out *all* the ways of Christ, and *all* the will of Christ. "Ye are my friends if ye do *whatsoever* I command you" (see John xv. 14, 15; Mat. xxviii; 1 John ii. 3, 4). And it is a solemn thing to hear a poor sinner speak, as this writer does, of any doctrines of God's holy word, and virtually declaring that for him a great portion of it has been written in vain, or only to be neglected, slighted, and disobeyed.

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\* This writer well knows that the "Brethren" have no more objection to *open* pews than to open benches. Those who are not accustomed to detect principles in outward things may see no evil in locked and rented pews, the rent proportioned to their comfort and convenience. Others, however, can see, in this, disobedience to the Scripture, "Have not the faith of our Lord Jesus with respect of persons" (Jas. ii.), and a selfish violation of the principle of Christian brotherhood, and of the law of love.

† The contents of about half of the very periodical (*The Eclectic Review*) in which this writer's strictures have found a place, are as follows: – "*Dissenters' Assurance Company*," 22 pages; "*Pictorial History of England*," 14 pp.; "*Sir Francis Head's Narrative*," 15 pp.; {513} "*Modern Poetry of Remote Ages*," 7 pp. I shall present the reader with a few sentences from the last of these reviews; the first subject is "The Deluge, a Drama:" "A decided current of poetry has of late years set in towards Noah's flood." ..... "Dr. M'Henry, who has just given us ten books on this subject, has been apparently so deep in the Flood, that he is actually not aware that any one has been there but himself." ..... "Has he not heard of Moore's '*Loves of the Angels*' and Byron's '*Heaven and Earth*'?" ..... "Dr. M'Henry has more consistently killed Irad in battle, so that there is no occasion for him to jump out of the ark in a love-fit." .... "The interest of 'the Deluge' turns on the love of Irad for Astarte, a Cainite maiden, but of a most gentle and most amiable character, *who, however, loves an angel*." The next work reviewed is "Mabinogion," or legendary romances of the Welch in the days of King Arthur, &c. containing matter full as foolish, if not, like the other, very nearly bordering on blasphemy. Of this work the *Eclectic* reviewer says, "We do not see how one library in Wales, of any pretension, can remain destitute of a copy of it without *the severest censure* on its possessor. From the paper on "The Dissenters' Assurance Company," I might also select passages which would startle many, and afford ample matter for sorrowful thought. The rest of the articles are of a semi-religious character, such as a review of "Macgill's Lectures on *Rhetoric* and Criticism." There is not a *spiritual article* (I might, perhaps, say passage) in the whole number, which, as I have never seen another, I may, I suppose, take as a specimen of the work. And it is this, with other works of the like kind, that is to give a tone to the Christianity of modern Dissenters! Alas! its acceptance amongst them too sadly shows what that tone at present is.

One of the secondary things for which this writer has no tears, is the question of "open ministry;"\* no less a question than whether our ascended Lord is now dispensing gifts to men "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ;" and if so, whether they are to be suffered to be exercised according to His command (1 Pet. iv. 10, 11), or to be set at nought, and superseded by the exclusive, and cold, though perhaps polished, ministrations, which the college can supply? He here (p. 586), admits that the Dissenting Churches are guilty of this, that thus they "*grieve and quench the Spirit,*" and that this "is to be lamented." But how much to be lamented we learn in the previous page. "Happy is that family which can weep at the death of a sparrow; happy (may we add?) the people that can repent and confess their sin, that some of them are Presbyterians, and some Congregationalists." The Lord pardon this levity. Happy, however, *I* should say, are those who are acting thus in ignorance, as compared with those who abide in known and acknowledged evil, and dare thus to trifle with the things of God.

It is in reference to such questions, that this writer further says (p. 586), "If we are too busy 'straining out gnats,' we shall presently 'swallow a camel.'" A strange warning from the pen of a Dissenter! For, what has made him and others Congregationalists, &c.? Has it not been the casting off of some of the circumstantial evil, and little more, of Establishments; and, while making a great noise about this, {514} retaining some of the worst principles of such systems? *They* have, indeed, long been "busy straining out gnats," while they have been all the time "swallowing camels." And if it please them to call camels gnats, and gnats camels, I can only say that *names* do not alter *things*.

But, "if we sigh and cry, that not all Christians admit of 'open ministry,' *our hearts will become hard* on occasions, really calling for *sorrow*." And these are the words of one who thinks it "does no man good" to dwell upon the great subject of "a sinful world;" that it is "*not wise* to meddle with *that sorrow*;" and who, while he condemns the "Brethren" for this, admits that they think it right to "preach the gospel, feed the hungry, and tend the sick."

And, may we not ask here, how these persons are engaged who profess to be so engrossed by this all-absorbing question of "Christ or the world," as to have no room for anxiety about such secondary things as "open ministry," &c. Are they the self-denying servants of all men *for Christ's sake*, and yet, like him, a thorn in the world's side, because, testifying by word and deed, that it's {sic} ways are evil, that judgment already rests upon it, and that execution, sure as the word of the living God, awaits it? Are they declaring plainly, the while, by their holy and unearthly walk, their patient endurance of evil, and by setting their face as a flint against its principles and lusts, that *they* are not of it, that *their* citizenship is in heaven, that they seek a country, and are waiting for their Lord? In a word, Are they "*blameless and harmless*, the sons of God, *without rebuke*, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation," among whom they "*shine as lights in the world*"? If so, "the *world* knoweth them not" (1 John iii. 1). But the world can well understand the splendid and partitioned chapel, in which he with the "gold ring, and goodly apparel, sits high," but the "poor man in vile raiment" must take the low and distant

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\* It has been already well shewn in a paper in the *Inquirer*, that, besides politics, this subject is the great ground of quarrel which the Dissenters have with the "Brethren," though this writer, who does not even attempt a vindication of close ministry, ingeniously endeavours to represent it as a mere circumstantial, a question of numbers and degree, and not of *principle*. I would add, that I may have noticed some fallacies and contradictions, which, with many others, have been already well exposed in that paper, from not having it before me, while writing the previous part of that which I am now closing.

place, – the paid and humanly educated, ordered, and distinguished clergy, – the “voluntary system,” (or reducing ministry in the sacred things of God, to the principles and terms of the the {sic} market), – the luxurious, self-pleasing habits, – the exaltation of literature, – and the wrangling about civil rights and privileges. These things the men of this world understand, and can have fellowship with those who do them, and say, Such as we are so are they (see 1 Cor. ii. 15). But with such it is not the *question* of “Christ OR the world,” but the *principle* of the world AND Christ. “If ye were of the world, the world would *love its own*; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, *therefore the world hateth you*. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord” (John xv.; comp. 2 Tim. iii. 12).

There is, however, another subject on which, as this writer feels very sore, so he gives the “Brethren” a parting word. They are slights of human learning. “That any one who *is*, or is preparing to be, a religious teacher, should meddle with Latin or Greek is treated by them with grave rebuke or bitter raillery” (p. 588). He confounds general literature with the cultivation of languages; and then, because the “Brethren” object to the former, asserts that they despise the latter too.\* All this writer’s grounds of displeasure, however, may be resolved into one. The “Brethren” object to *worldliness*, whether religious or otherwise, and regard politics, literature, exclusive ministry, &c. as so many forms of it. But in so doing they are content with the godly way of “grave rebuke.” With this the “Eclectic” writer is sore displeased. He has no quarrel with them for *leaving* other churches. He does not unite with the Churchman in the cry of schism. He could not, indeed, have hoped that those who, if guilty of it, set out in sin, should have ended in shewing to England “a more excellent way.” No, he is angry with them for “molesting the peace of other churches,” for disturbing those who are self-complacently “settled on their lees,” for telling them that they cannot “serve two masters,” that there is no {515} such thing in truth as a “*Christian world*,”\* and that Christians should not harbour the question of “Christ *or* the world,” but steadfastly act upon the holy principle of – *Christ and not the world*.

And now I gladly close my remarks upon this sad production. A painful task has it been to comment upon it; for the judgment of charity itself can hardly acquit the writer of wilful misrepresentation. And when we consider the mere rationalism which pervades it, the scornful tone† of his remarks, the levity with which he handles the things of God, his

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\* I would merely add, upon this subject, to what has been already said, that some of the “Brethren” have been long actually engaged in forwarding works intended to facilitate the study of the Greek and Hebrew languages. And as to their being hostile to education (p. 575), I would observe, that, though not joined with education societies, they think it a good thing to educate the poor in the useful and necessary branches of knowledge. This also they do “in detail,” by erecting and hiring school-houses, and paying masters, to give instruction in the Scriptures, reading, writing, arithmetic, &c.

\* There is nothing self-contradictory in the expression “*religious world*,” for man is naturally *religious*; but that of “*Christian world*” is sadly anomalous, and, like other popular phrases, fearfully expressive of the existing state of things. Surely it was never intended that the terms “*Christian*” and “*world*,” should be named together, save in the way of *contrast*, or meet together, save in the way of *conflict*. And yet they are now found joined together in all *seeming* harmony. But “Let God be true,” &c. See Gal. vi. 14; 1 Cor. ii. 15, 16.

† While his style is altogether his own, the tone and sentiments of this writer present a striking resemblance to those of Gibbon, when writing of the early Christians. Compare the following passages, in which, though the principles of reasoning are the same, the polished infidel has the advantage of the *Eclectic* writer in mildness and delicacy of expression:

rough-shod trampling upon holy ground, his manner of speaking of the Spirit and of prayer (p. 588), of faith (p. 577), of the Scriptures, (p. 578–80), we may well enquire what his thoughts about the Spirit of God, and the word of God really are? and (while praying the Lord to pardon him), warn him to take heed to his steps, to seek for the Spirit of the "weaned child," and for grace to "bring *every* thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." And surely it is not needless to caution the depository of this production also, and to tell the "Eclectic" to beware, lest, low as it is in spirituality, it may sink lower {516} still, and lose its orthodoxy too, the only thing it has left, the loss of which would not be gain; and lest its pages, already the receptacle of worldly wisdom, worldly literature, and earthly vanities, may (for the transition is easy) become tainted also with the unholy figments of modern neology and vain philosophy. And to both the "Eclectic" writer and the "Eclectic Review," I would commend the words of Gamaliel, – "And now I say unto you, *Refrain from these men, and let them alone*: for if this counsel, or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, *ye cannot overthrow it*; lest haply ye be found even to *fight against God*."

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GIBBON.

"The Christians felt and confessed that such institutions [magistracy, &c.] might be necessary for the *present system* of the world, and they cheerfully submitted to the authority of their Pagan governors. But while they inculcated the maxim of passive obedience, they refused to take any active part in the civil administration or the military defence of the empire. ... It was (they held) impossible that Christians, *without renouncing a more sacred duty*, could assume the character of a *soldier*, a *magistrate*, or a *prince*."

"This indolent, or even criminal disregard to the public welfare, exposed them to *the contempt and reproaches of the pagans*, who very frequently asked them *what must be the fate of the empire*, attacked on every side by barbarians, if *all mankind* were to adopt such *pusillanimous sentiments*." – *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Chap. xv., vol. ii., p. 144–5.

THE "ECLECTIC" WRITER.

"But he [Mr. Hall] could not be satisfied without *condemning* simultaneously, the *policeman*, the *magistrate*, the *sovereign*; without calling on every *true* Christian to leave these important posts to be occupied by all the *rogues* of the land, and confounding one who 'rules in the fear of God' with the mercenary soldier of fortune, or the captain of banditti."

"Let but one *entire generation* of Christians imbibe this doctrine, and a *slavish abjectness of mind* will be the certain result." Page 590.

It is evident that the blessings and precepts in the Lord's teaching on the mount are foolishness alike to both these writers. What he calls poverty of spirit, meekness, &c., they style "pusillanimity," and "slavish abjectness of mind." And yet He, who "when he suffered, threatened not," has "*left us an example* that we should follow in his steps" (1 Pet. ii. 21, &c.). Experience, however, might have taught both these writers the groundlessness of their alarm lest these principles should become universal; for the annals of Christendom are the annals of carnage and blood. Is there not here a *real* "libel and affront upon magistracy?" Every magistrate in the land, from the highest to the lowest, who is not a *true Christian*, is, according to this writer, a *rogue*; while, perhaps the majority of them neither pretend to, nor acknowledge, such a thing as conversion to God. Sure I am, however, that many of them have too much mere moral uprightness to adopt the course this writer has done, of accrediting his charges against the "Brethren," by prefacing his attack with the titles of publications from which he has not given even a single extract.

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*The Inquirer*. October, 1839. Art. *The Plymouth Brethren and the Eclectic Review*. London: J. Dumas.

Want of space compels us to defer till next month an article which we had prepared in reply to the statements and reasonings of this paper. In the meantime we request our readers to possess themselves of the *Inquirer* for October, that they may be fully competent to judge of the correctness of the strictures we shall submit to them on our next appearance.



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Art. VI. *The Inquirer*. October, 1839. Art. *The Plymouth Brethren and the Eclectic Review*. London: J. Dinnis.

THE 'Inquirer' of October, 1839, contains an elaborate answer by one of the Plymouth Brethren, to the article in our May number concerning them. As this writer has taxed us with disingenuousness and open misstatements, we are forced to reply; otherwise we should have avoided putting ourselves into controversy with an individual.

He opens with many pious but misplaced thoughts on the painfulness of being attacked and having to defend oneself; and throughout, indeed, by entitling us *accusers*, *assailants*, &c., he might seem to be laboring under the delusion, that it is we who began the assault. He reminds us of the duty of dealing as tenderly with the Lord's brethren as with the Lord himself; and afterwards intimates that we might have cried out, *crucify him*, against Jesus himself. In concluding, he warns us to let them alone, lest haply we be found fighting against God. Any one would suppose that the Brethren had never assailed us, nor our views: or that they had employed only words and arguments, while we answered with deeds of violence. Yet from the very beginning of their course they have not ceased to attack our principles and the persons of our leading men, sometimes by name; in print and by word of mouth. One strong instance from the 1st vol. of the *Christian Witness* will show what they *can* say, p. 392 (on the Present Apostacy). 'The gospel sets forth the alienation, 1st, of the [Jewish] nation as a whole; 2ndly, of ALL the religionists of the day; 3rdly, of the Instructors and Officers, Scribes and Lawyers, Elders, Priests, and High Priest; and, lastly, of the people as persuaded by them. And this we say, *with all confidence*, that they who have not proved in their own persons the *very* same among the professors of our day' [here *very* is printed in italics], 'either have *not* the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, or have the guilt of burying its light in their own bosoms.' What an unamiable bigot! our readers may exclaim. No such thing: it is an enthusiast, perhaps really amiable, but cramped in heart and stunted in mind by false notions; not least, {66} by the habit of imagining\* *all* mental error to be a result of sin. In the *mode* of address different men will of course differ exceedingly, but there is this in substance common to his party, that they try to act on your *conscience* (assuming that it is guilty), not on your intellect, if you do not assent to them. This Brother accordingly imputes evil motives to us, and goes steadily to work to depreciate our moral principle. Such a mass of misconceptions we never remember to have met with in the like space, as in his reply; but we have been obliged to strike out from our MS. the explanations of many of them; for even now this article exceeds all reasonable limits. This inaptitude on his part is not from natural dulness; nor do we believe that it is from dishonesty; but it is because he sees through a Plymouth medium. Of this we think our readers will find proof enough as we proceed, though we can only exhibit a part of what his reply furnishes.

Yet as we would on no account defend our faults by those of another, we have been reviewing carefully all that we said, and do not find that we have laid any such immoral imputations on the Brethren, individually or collectively. Certainly we did not impugn their good faith or sincerity: nay, we spoke very freely concerning their many praiseworthy points of conduct and character. We did not grudge them their liberty to establish in

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\* We do not mean to imply that the Brethren have more than very partially developed the results of this evil dogma.

their own church whatever they believe right: we did not attack their Open Ministry as wicked or absurd: but we attacked their *intolerance*. Our Brother appears little to understand the difference of assailing persons† and assailing principles; otherwise he would not charge us with ‘inconsistency’‡ (the great staple of his reply), because we can see good in his party, and are not afraid to publish it. Forsooth, if George Fox or Ignatius Loyola were again to run their course among us, we should be ‘inconsistent’ in strongly opposing and exposing their errors while we cheerfully acknowledged their benevolent intentions, their deep piety, and thorough self-devotion to the cause they had espoused! The Brother gratuitously ascribes to us the temper of a ‘slandrous’ partisan, and then looks on it as self-confuting that we do not act up to it. He also taunts us with inconsistency, because we do not contend that *our* systems are perfect, though he most gladly jumps at every concession which we make, or seem to make, on this side.

Some of the nonsense which he endeavors to extract from the opening of our article, is as follows: that we do as one who praises a servant for respectful submission to his master’s authority, while he was breaking his commands: that we speak of primitive Episcopacy as the first departure from the divine order, and allege the necessity of the case; hereby casting a bold imputation of want of wisdom and forethought on God: that we confess, but coolly abide in, degeneracy of condition and apostacy from God’s order: that we declare, it is not right to desire, that which we avow it is our sin not to have; and that we ought to aim at things too hurtful to be desired. – Reasoning which we had addressed specially against the views of persons who ‘from the days of Dr. Owen to the present,’ aimed at imitating the ancient church in the *number* of presbyters, he represents as intended for a confutation of the Brethren’s views. Having poured ridicule upon it with much appearance of justice, he then complains of OUR misrepresenting the question; as though what *they* cared for was merely the ‘number’ and not the principle! Afterwards (in a note to p. 513), he not obscurely imputes this to craft on our part, and remarks that we ‘do not even attempt a vindication of close ministry.’ Why is he determined that we shall quarrel with him here? Because he does not know what toleration means. That which in us is forbearance and a desire to grant our brethren their just freedom, he mistakes for hypocrisy. Our plain statements of that which is good in them (as, that they hold it right to do good in detail\* by preaching the gospel, feeding the hungry, tending the sick), he regards as a heartless sarcasm: and in every doubtful case interprets our words for the worse. He seems even annoyed that we are not dogmatic (note to p. 498): ‘I cannot accuse this writer of dogmatism; *his principles appear too lax and unsettled for that: and besides, as regards himself and his associates, he only stands on the defensive.*’ Are we not then very cruel assailants?

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† They attack the *personal character* of Dissenters, more than of others. For an illustration of their mode, we quote from Christian Witness, Vol. i. p. 354, ‘Their systems are on the whole more scriptural than the Church of England, *but their practice worse*. It is clear also that (speaking of them as a body) the same fact which gives the character of apostacy to the Establishment, – union with the world, stamps the same features upon modern dissent: and *in a form more fearful*, because *with infinitely less of spirituality among individuals*, it is more connected with the irreligion and ungodliness of popular feeling.’

‡ He cannot understand how any one should covet power over men’s minds more than rank or money!

\* We disapprove, indeed, of their total, schismatic *isolation* of themselves; and of their supposing that acts of parliament are indifferent to the morals and religion of a country; which is a most erroneous and hurtful opinion. The words, *in detail*, were intended to imply the contrast of private to combined or legislative acts.

His misrepresentation of our views concerning church order is (unintentionally) so erroneous, and so ingenious, that we must {68} explain ourselves more at large; after which we shall leave our readers to say whether we are so self-contradictory.

We hold that a church consists of true Christians, acting together for mutual spiritual profit, under different forms and modes, better and worse: that the inevitable intermixture of unsound with sound disciples will probably embarrass, but need not absolutely hinder, the general edification. We apprehend that a practical separation of all members into two classes, the teachers and the taught (often called laity and ministers), will ever take place: for the ministry of the word is so absorbing and great a matter, that few can do it by halves; but he who begins to teach, (if qualified), soon gives himself wholly to it. No wall of partition between the two classes, we believe, exists: want of competence or of leisure, not want of any formality, excludes brethren from ministering. Thus far, we believe, the Brethren hold with the writer; and he is not aware that there is any difference of principle between them and common Dissenters. Yet for this Brother to paraphrase our words 'all professors of religion,' by 'Pharisees, covetous,' &c., appears to us unbecoming and absurd; when he knows that the apostles had no direct method of excluding such persons. Does he mean to make it an axiom, that there are no 'Pharisees, covetous,' &c., among his own party?

If the Brethren have found a new and better method of assisting the passage from the one class to the other (that is, of *training teachers*), viz., by the system of open ministry, let them come and teach us; or let them set the example in a friendly way, and, if it is really better, others will gradually follow it. But let them not meanwhile heap invective on the method, which we, in our ignorance, but with good intentions, follow. This Brother imputes to us the opinion that scholastic learning suffices to make a minister, and (although writing evidently under a great desire to moderate his *expressions*) appears to justify our strong statement, that they cannot allude to Dissenting academies 'without an ecstacy of scorn.' P. 495, 'The colleges would, I suppose, furnish *any* number of *them*' [teachers]; and, as to 'want of gifts, scholastic divinity and rhetoric would be a sufficient substitute for *these*.' We know no Congregationalists who doubt whether the *first* qualification for ministry comes from the Spirit of God.

We hold, farther, that the apostles adapted all their regulations to the immediate wants of their day. The widows were relieved by deacons in one place, in another they were under the management of Timothy, with special arrangements suggested by the progress of events. Presbyters or bishops at Philippi and Ephesus, but teachers and ministers of various sorts at Corinth, and probably at Rome, were raised up and acknowledged or appointed in office, with no exact uniformity at first. The framework of {69} the church, as the Brethren rightly teach, was moulded by the life within; so that it was a true representative of inward power or of deep-felt need. The evidence of the Apocalypse serves to convince the writer that *primitive* episcopacy (not diocesan) was becoming general in the lifetime of apostles; and the 'necessity of the case' was one which acted as much in their presence, as behind their back. Nay, they themselves at Jerusalem recognized in James that priority, which other churches imitated, and soon learned to entitle Episcopacy. But the Brother imputes to us a statement that this was a departure from the divine order! and says we are boldly imputing to God a want of forethought.

Now human nature being ever in the main like itself, and the first anomalies of the ancient church having so soon disappeared, that we can speak of one particular form, viz., Congregational Episcopacy, as *the* primitive one; it is a fair *presumption*, that the nearer our system is to the apostolic, the better. Moreover, it is highly inexpedient, and therefore wrong, capriciously to deviate from that model: for the following of precedent (in civil or

ecclesiastical matters) is most valuable to save disputes concerning indifferent things. The burden of proof, therefore, rests with him who vindicates a departure from apostolic precedent. He has, as it were, to apologize, and to establish that we cannot or ought not to adhere to it, owing to our *change of circumstances*. It was in this apologizing tone that we wrote the opening pages of our former article. But on the other hand, we think the Brethren to be decidedly and mischievously wrong in teaching that the apostolic regulations are our law for imitation; a law by which the Brethren themselves must inevitably be condemned. We believe that the grand universal *precepts*, and the spirit of Christianity itself, diffused through the apostolic writings, are our eternal law: but that their *conduct* in its detail cannot always be wisely imitated. When they adopt rules for churches possessed of miraculous gifts, to imitate them might be absurd, if we have no such gifts: to lay hands, as they did, on newly baptized adults, or even to anoint the sick, might in us be an act of presumption. It is useless to imitate their forms, where it is undeniable that we cannot realize the spirit and inward substance of those forms. It is better to have our church a living reality, adapted to the wants and circumstances of the nineteenth century, than a stuffed image of the first.

But to be set on having many presbyters in every church, barely to imitate the outside of the apostolic arrangements, when we cannot imitate apostolic unanimity, might be but a sham reformation. If brought about by the actings of the *legal* principle, (as though it were an abstract duty), we rather contemplate mischief from it. By establishing so strongly the importance of a FORM, it might once more elevate church officers into an over- (70) ruling caste. Hence (we suggested) ‘perhaps it is not much to be lamented that we cannot.’ In the providence of God, evil is neutralized by evil. Nothing here is perfect, but if errors be opposite in character, they usefully balance each other. It is imperfection (and it is ordinarily connected with sin), that strong intellectual differences exist. Yet while perfection is not attained, it is possibly seen by the All-Wise to be better that we err in many ways, than all in one way. On the other hand, it appeared to us that there is no real and powerful impediment to a greater measure of co-operation among Dissenting churches than generally exists, and that many advantages might accrue from a greater blending of them. Reunions produced by the acting of a freer and larger spirit, not by imitating an antique exterior, but by developing a modern reality, would be accompanied with an establishment of the right limits of private judgment and mutual toleration. It would set up union and peace on the basis of justice\* and freedom: and be in little danger of rivetting upon us mere chains of formality. It ought not to be aimed at in order to produce ‘a fine show of presbyters’ (for in such words we indicated our fear that one zealous for antiquity† might gain only an empty parade), but for its intrinsic advantages. If we discuss with such an one the accomplishment of his end, we must discuss it as an outward thing to be brought about by direct outward effort, and it appears to us greatly to resolve itself into a question of ‘pounds, shillings, and pence.’ We may be wrong in all this; but a person who can turn it into such nonsense as was above produced, shows a want of common sense himself.

The Brother is offended that we do *not* maintain our churches to be true counterparts of the apostolic system; which he holds to be a perfect model. He regards it as our duty to maintain this, or else, quit our position as untenable. ‘We have seen,’ says he, p. 497,

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\* “Who art thou that judgeth thy brother?” &c., is a principle, the *letter* of which is familiar to all; but which this brother sufficiently shows he does not practically understand.

† *Highest antiquity* [*why not Scripture?*] says our acute critic.

‘aggravated evil coolly confessed and coolly vindicated.’ This ‘aggravated evil’ is, the sin generally accompanying separation and schisms; such, *for instance*, as the separation of the Brethren from all other churches. The Brother cannot embrace, at least cannot retain, so strange a thought as that we included the formation of the Plymouth body among separations? He thinks we are as it were complimenting them by comparison. Again, p. 494 [the Eclectic reviewers], ‘have *admittedly* departed from the apostolic model, which, as regards ecclesiastical order, is simply APOSTACY.’ The *admissions* which we made {71} include the Brethren and all other churches; inasmuch as, we conceive, nothing but sects can now possibly exist. Yet farther, p. 512, ‘If the writer does not regard [the Establishment] as apostate, he is guilty of sin in not living within its pale.’ We differ widely from this Brother. If of two churches, one is ill-managed and opposes vast obstacles to change, while another is somewhat better ordered, and presents inferior impediments; we hold ourselves at liberty to move from the worse to the better, in spite of all this fulmination; though we may neither believe the former to be apostate, nor the latter to be perfectly apostolic. We believe that this Brother speaks the sentiments of his whole body, in allowing nothing between these extremes. Forsooth, we may not go *out*, unless a church be apostate; and may not come *in* unless its constitution be perfectly apostolic. A singular dilemma.

He attributes to us a confession of degeneracy; and after various severe deductions, asks whether we were intending to prove that it was no degeneracy at all. Great acuteness was not needed to see that we laid no vehement stress on the matter in question, and, indeed, had no very fixed opinion; but supposed another person, zealous ‘for the highest antiquity,’ to consider us degenerate. He imagines that we as it were envied the ‘fine show’ of presbyters, if we understand his italics. At a later part (p. 513) he strangely gives it as our opinion, that the Dissenting churches ‘grieve and quench the Spirit; and that this is to be lamented.’ He has seized upon a supposed incautious admission. We merely imagined (p. 586) a Plymouth Brother to allege this, and for arguments sake admitting it, we urged that, *even so*, it did not justify them in refusing to unite in charitable and religious societies, outside of all churches. But here, as elsewhere, it is clear that this Brother holds all churches, but his own, to be guilty of this sin (churches known and unknown to him) by virtue of their mere constitution. The churches over which Baxter, Howe, Owen, Doddridge presided (honored names with the Brethren, we believe), were all apostate; *for* they had departed from the divine order and appointment! We confidently ask, Is not this, under the pretence of honoring the Spirit, a shocking over-valuing of outward form; the very essence of high Church error?

He calls our phrase, ‘attraction of cohesion,’ a new name for *Christian love*. A little attention to our argument, or a slight knowledge of church history, would have shown him that we spoke of *cohesion without love*; which was common in the church for fifteen centuries. Christians generally quarrelled *within* the pale, but none were willing to go out of it. They might dispute who should be bishop, but they did not dispute whether bishops ought to exist. No one dreamed of changing the organization; hence secessions did not take place.

{72} *Our* disputes are, on the contrary, more concerning the right organization, than about any thing else. This constitutes a difference of circumstance between us and the primitive disciples, which (let the Brethren kick against the pricks as much as they please) makes it absolutely impossible for us to imitate the comprehensiveness of the apostolic churches. We are all of necessity sects, sections, or denominations, persuasions, if any prefer these softer terms. The Brother regards us as ‘self-condemned,’ because we speak of dissenting sects. Does he forget that we used the same term of the Brethren? It is an



untractable phenomenon, that a Plymouth Brother cannot in conscience become a common Dissenter; nor can an Episcopalian become one of the Brethren; nor can a Quaker become an Episcopalian: and so on. A church constructed to offend in its organization the conscience of *no one*, cannot exist; as long as this stubborn fact subsists, the direct contrariety of consciences. The Brethren flatter themselves most egregiously, in pretending that they are all-comprehensive. They will admit, no doubt, any Christian *who will submit to their regulations*; and so will Independents or Presbyterians: but none of the three will break up their existing order to please an applicant for admission. The Brethren will not give up Open Ministry, and take to bishops and priests, to satisfy the conscience of an Episcopalian. Open Ministry then is their '*bond of union*,' and it is a point '*of difference, not of agreement*,' among the true people of God. By this Brother's own criterion, therefore (note, p. 494), his church is a sect. Shall we, then, have no churches at all, no order, no ministry, until we are agreed as to the right church order? Shall we, on the one hand, acquiesce, without grudging or murmuring, that each body should regulate its own concerns, claiming to be acknowledged as a church, yet allowing that other bodies are churches too? Or, on the other, shall each of us protest that *his* alone is the true church, and that all others are counterfeits, or (to use the Brethren's phrase) are apostate? Now to *acquiesce* under the overwhelming difficulty is generally designated by 'agreeing to differ.' We had stated that the Brethren disapproved of this. This 'Brother' in name broadly denies it (p. 505); yet in a note he allows that it is highly probable that we have heard many of them speak to that effect; only (he thinks) meaning that they disliked 'indifferentism.' But he himself most fully warrants us in reasserting, that he regards it as a sin, to agree to differ at least concerning the constitution of churches; which is the most critical and important case. Again, we complained that they would not co-operate on neutral ground (p. 575), and that they pretended nothing was neutral (p. 586). Now on this the Brother remarks (p. 498), 'Neutral ground; THAT IS, *ground which would involve a violation of principle, a {73} sanction of evil, and defilement of conscience.*' Do they not then practically regard nothing as neutral? that is, do they not think it wrong to agree to differ? And does not this Brother plainly avow that they will co-operate with no Christians except those of their own sentiments (p. 509)? *He* catches at our expressions; *we* look at the substance and meaning of their words and actions alike, and we find this clear result; that at a time when other dissenting bodies are learning more and more to avoid arrogant pretensions (the grand foundation of schism), the Plymouth Brethren, like the Church of England, avow and defend them. Nay, this Brother rebukes us for not doing the same. 'The Eclectic writer,' says he, p. 514, 'has no quarrel with them (the Brethren) for *leaving* other churches. He does not unite with the Churchman in the cry of schism.' [This, we are to suppose, would seem pardonable.] 'No, he is angry with them for molesting the peace of other churches,' &c. Most assuredly we are. We would not call our Brother a bigot, because we trust he has too many good elements of another kind in him; but we think, in so far as *this* point is concerned, he shows a bigot's sympathy with bigots. 'The Church of England declares she is the only church in England (says the Brother virtually); *this* is bearable; for so do we declare the same of ourselves. But the Eclectic Review says, Let each man obey his conscience, and unite himself to the best church he can find or make; but let no one disturb the peace of other churches *by exclusive pretensions* [these were our words, p. 583, though the Brother, inadvertently we presume, did not notice them]; now *that* is 'unbearable indifferentism and worldliness.'

We had believed that the Brethren had too much experience of the unjust pretensions of the Establishment not to understand the following sentence of ours, p. 573: 'If any one allege that herein consists our sin, that we are so ready to separate from one another, he

will state a great truth; *yet a truth which may easily be so used as to inculcate error and injustice.*' We meant, as our next paragraph showed, that the separations of churches oftener took place in anger than in love; yet, that it is a gross injustice and absurdity to say, 'Our Lord would have us all to be of one mind; therefore it is *your* duty to be of *our* mind:' which is the common reasoning of Churchmen. This Brother instantly commits the very injustice which we deprecated; not perceiving that '*our* sin' includes all Protestants.

So admirable is his self-satisfaction that after accepting our statements concerning the divisions of the churches, he adds, 'And if this (the Brethren's) remonstrance be ALMOST UNIVERSAL in its aspect, it is accounted for by our opposer, when he says, that this bad and degenerate state of things is the case *not of Congregationalism, but of Protestantism.*' Thus the {74} Brother even forgets that he is a Protestant, and looks on our words as a justification of his sect! He regards his party as something so unique as to fall under no category. It is excluded from all common terms, such as Separatists, Dissenters, Protestants; and, naturally, it has exclusive privileges to correspond. They are pet lambs of God, who are permitted to butt with all their might at any one who enters his house, but whom no one can touch without impiety.

Perhaps he will say, that it is *the possession of the truth* which justifies him and his church, and makes them to be catholic and others to be sects. We hold that it does not justify any assumption of superiority. Each church *believes* that it possesses the truth; but which *is* true, God has given no earthly judge. We must meanwhile live on terms of equality. If any Christian be 'weak' in conscience, and through over-scrupulosity cannot bear close ministry, while his fellow Christians can bear either the close or the open, he might plead with them for enlargement on this ground; and those who look on it as entirely a question of expediency, might be able to effect some compromise. Patient representations, *and truth to back them*, work wonders in a church not nailed down by endowments. If the Brethren be really the 'strong' ones, this would enable them to bear up against ignorance, prejudice, love of traditionary customs, or any of the other things, which (with much or little grounds) they often impute to common Dissenters. But unhappily these Brethren allow no neutral ground on these matters, and abhor compromise; which abhorrence must to others mean, that they are determined to have all their own way.

But we must proceed to our alleged misstatements. The Brother has here got up a case against us by a variety of methods. *First*, whereas we had again and again declared that they violently disapproved of creeds and test articles, he has represented us as pretending that they *enforced* all the opinions of which we spoke; and when he has nothing else to object against our statements, he alleges that the opinions are 'freely held.' Yet he clearly discerned that we were not writing their creed, for he remarks that all essential articles of the faith are omitted; while he actually imputes this to us as a fault. We are not absurd enough to imagine that a creed can be 'enforced' on any mass of men, much less on English seceders. Nay, in Popery as in corrupt Judaism, it has always been, 'My people love to have it so.' Coercion falls on the units, not on the multitude. *Secondly*, some opinions are checked and corrected by others; so that two combined make a different thing from two viewed separately: and that which is in theory contradictory is harmonized in practice. This happens peculiarly with the Brethren, from their habit of very broad and exaggerated statement. Now in such cases, this {75} Brother represents us as 'confuting ourselves!' Equally undiscerning is he as to the real\* contradictions; the fault of which lies at

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\* It is not wonderful that he does not notice all of these; for instance, that it is 'lawful to lend, but unlawful to borrow;' an impossible union of correlatives, as we think.

the Brethren's door, not ours. Moreover, when we believed that they were not wholly agreed *among themselves*, we did not feel it right to force and pinch their views, so as to produce an unreal harmony. A great and substantial agreement there is, as this Brother indeed boasts; but we did not pretend that it was perfect, especially as to the minutiae of interpretation which have no immediate result. *Thirdly*, we warned our readers that the phraseology into which we translated their language would often be disowned by the Brethren; yet he has criticised it word by word, as though we had alleged it all to be theirs. *Fourthly*, we did not pretend to exhibit doctrines held or believed by them all, but currently taught and inculcated; and in drawing general conclusions we never adverted to the points of detail, as though these were believed generally. For instance, the important point is, not whether they all hold a special exposition of the Old Testament, but whether they all assent to the principle on which such exposition rests, when it is an extravagant one; or dictate concerning it in a haughty tone, when this is the thing which we were exhibiting. Every part of our account is drawn either from their books or from the life; but we have done as a painter in drawing a national likeness, viz., in selecting strong and well developed features, thoroughly characteristic. In this way the spectator best apprehends the style of countenance, and gains what we called a 'substantially faithful' impression, 'as a whole.' But we spoke of many individuals, as having 'but partially imbibed or understood the system.' This Brother, therefore, deals unfairly, in pretending that we attributed all these opinions to every one. *Fifthly*, he has greatly misrepresented us, in suppressing the fact, that we ourselves informed the reader that Mr. P. Hall disavowed the statement that the government of the world is under the devil's guidance. That which we alleged *must logically follow* from Mr. H.'s views, and is essentially *implicated* in them, this Brother by partial quotations pretends that we impute as Mr. H.'s explicit doctrine; and then adduces quotations from Mr. H. which add nothing to what we have already said. *Sixthly*, he speaks as though we were holding up Mr. H. *personally* to odium, as the supporter of 'ungodly' and 'wicked' doctrines (such are the Brother's words); as if we pretended Mr. H. to desire a dissolution of civil society! And then, our declaration that the Brethren were *practically* support- {76} ers of Tory principles (in which this Brother seems to glory), which ought to have shown him that he has misrepresented us, is adduced by him as inconsistent and self-confuting on our part. *Seventhly*, he puts us before his readers in the light of hypocrites, who hate the Brethren for concealed reasons, and attack them for sham ones. Their intolerance; their hatred to civil liberty and apathy as to breaking the chains of the slave; their infatuated contempt of mental cultivation; which are with us prominent and avowed grounds of opposing their system, this Brother represents as so many points, which, we suppose by great acuteness, he has discovered that we dislike. *Eighthly*, to aggravate all the above, he most gratuitously imagines that we disapprove of all the opinions which we name as current among them; and makes use of this to give us some very needless grave admonitions. Yet we distinctly declared, 'Many of their opinions appear to us to involve valuable truth;' words which he quotes, but does not believe. *Ninthly*, he has in two instances really misquoted our words, while putting a false sense upon them, so as to obtain pretence for contradiction. These will be noticed presently.

By help of so many engines he produces the appearance of much injustice on our part; and yet, as to the *general result*, every practical and important doctrine which we ascribed, he accepts, either by passing over our pointed statements, or by express avowal; sometimes using stronger and more precise terms than we would have ventured to adopt. On the other hand, the points contested by him are not practical, and several of them are marked by us as necessarily theoretic. Indeed, as regards the case between us and the Brethren, we should willingly adopt this Brother's own letter as the groundwork and book

of reference; for every erroneous and hurtful principle which we ascribe to them is defended or exhibited by him.

He plainly intimates that he is justified in charging us with falsehood, because we did not verify our assertions from the Christian Witness. We did not do so, *first*, because, while convinced ourselves that the great mass of its sentiments is held by the Brethren, we knew that they would appeal against it, if we tried to 'demonstrate' by quotations that they held an opinion which it was not otherwise notorious that they held. And herein this Brother justifies us, for he declares that such quotations would go for nothing (p. 499). But, *secondly*, having had considerable means of personal observation, the writer held himself at liberty to use such sources, particularly because the system is one which is not always the same on paper and in reality. Reading this Brother's declaration, that 'they do not think it wrong to agree to differ,' and the eloquent extracts which he makes on this subject, any one might imagine them a most comprehensive and liberal body, which is very contrary to the fact. {77} Read their declamations against the imposing of a creed, and you will not suspect what the Brother unawares confesses, as we shall show, that this is but a name. Moreover, by numerous expressions the reader was given to understand, that we had other means of knowledge beside the books whose titles were prefixed; as indeed it is very customary with reviews to set the names of books, as mottoes, at the head of an article. Whatever personal responsibility the writer hereby incurred, is relieved, if not entirely removed, by this Brother himself; and as for a few points that remain, *not affecting the general question*, the writer is most willing to bear it.

The bad features which we ascribed to their system may be described as intolerance, censoriousness, exaggeration, peremptoriness, hatred of freedom, contempt of mental cultivation, and (consequent) loss of common sense in the exposition of Scripture. The Brother refutes none of these; but avows some, and pretty clearly exhibits the rest. Their chief practical opinions may be concisely stated, as those concerning open ministry, concerning educating ministers, concerning democracy in the church and the receiving of ministers, concerning separation, test articles, church history and other literature, the canon of Scripture, worldly property, worldly power, political rights, and improvement of the community; on all which the Brother has none but a fictitious difference from our statement. When in addition to this, we volunteered to say (as from personal knowledge) much that was honorable concerning them, and which we might as well have suppressed, it appears to us an unworthy thing in this Brother, by measured yet sufficiently definite and often repeated language, to hold us up as false witnesses.

In such a mass of confusion as he has produced by his misinterpretations, it is difficult to us to know where to begin explanations; for if we take every detail in order, we shall fill a volume.

I. We begin, then, with what, he says, 'surpasses all our other statements in careless hardihood,' the opinions of the Brethren, and particularly of Mr. P. Hall, concerning magistracy. Here the Brother is ignorant of the contrast of meaning between the phrases 'ordained by God's *providence*,' and 'ordained by God's *grace*;' which we have heard so often from eminent men among the Brethren, that we supposed it to be understood by them all. And if not, our own words explained it; for we made *providence* to be that which also ordains 'banditti, earthquake, pestilence;' and said that God 'regulated and controlled even the devil's acts,' and yet this Brother pretends it is contradictory to say, 'ordained by providence,' and 'appointed by the devil.'

Now, while we think the doctrine to be very *mischievous* that a Christian ought to forswear political power and rights, and in so {78} far, mischievous to hold that the devil



is the immediate source of this power, we did not pronounce the latter to be an *ungodly*\* and *wicked* opinion, which would seem to imply impiety in those who hold it. What we do regard as *ungodly* is, that the Brethren should force upon others their tenet about political disfranchisement, as one main test of their Christian character. This Brother will not deny, that whoever interprets the New Testament herein differently from them, they pronounce to be *worldly*. 'Union with the world,' with them means very chiefly, the retaining and exercising political† rights; and though most of them see that Paul must be the first person condemned, they do not shrink from this haughty conduct.

But be the sentiment ungodly or otherwise, it is not seldom professed, without incurring reproof, by many of the brethren; while *all* hold the practical inference from it, which is the main thing for which we care. In the *Christian Witness*, vol. vi. p. 66, we read: 'Satan has in his power (*subject indeed to an overruling control*) the kingdoms of the earth during this age, and no longer. He is only the prince of this world for a time; but he is termed even the god of this world. The world and its kingdoms *will be* redeemed into the possession of the Lord of the whole earth, &c. ... (Note) I do not think that Satan rightfully had the kingdoms of the world when he offered them to the Lord: [I think] that he was not *at that time* prince of the world; and *only became so by the world having rejected Christ.*' Again, ch. iv. vol. v. pp. 2, 3: 'Does the world belong to Christ or Satan? *This is a question of immense practical concern, as involving our present standing and relationship both to God and the world.* There is no question it belongs to Christ in title and in right, for all things were made by him and for him, &c. ... But in this dispensation of long-suffering, there is no visible assertion of that right, *nor any exercise of it for the right ordering of the world.* Such an assumption of direct control, we learn expressly from Rev. xi. 15, 17, 18, to be yet future, &c. ... The devil had claimed the power of this world in his approach to Christ as the tempter, and *our Lord was far from denying the fact.* Nay, in the progress of his rejection, he could himself own him to be the prince of this world, &c. &c. The Scriptures relative to these facts have been largely opened for our instruction in the WITNESS, and they have no doubt by {79} this time become familiar to us.' Afterwards, p. 5, at bottom: 'The relation and intercourse subsisting between wicked spirits and ourselves, *involves much more than a mere influence over our hearts*, though that indeed is most pernicious. Their active personal interference in the concerns of the world, it would be most injurious for us to overlook; for assuredly it is real.' We believe the writer is maintaining the reality of physical miracles wrought by devils; for he is discussing Rev. xiv. 13, 14. But it is more to our purpose to insist, that he deduces from the fact, that the devil is prince of the world, the practical inference that we may not exercise political rights or authority, which is what we asserted. If we understand the above, it is shortly thus: 'Christ is king *de jure*, but exercises no direct power; the devil is king *de facto*, and in the real exercise of power; therefore all political office is unlawful to a Christian.' But we proceed to Mr. Hall. It is difficult to quote from so exceedingly diffuse a writer, but we must attempt it. In 'Discipleship,' p. 34, he is arguing from the text, 'that which is highly

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\* Opinions may be either true or false, but they are not in any strictness godly or ungodly. To call an opinion *ungodly*, could only mean (we apprehend) that the holding it is a mark of ungodliness.

† It is not merely the exercising them *ill* to which they object (for who does not?), but to exercising them *at all*: to the being linked in a 'worldly system.'



esteemed\* among men, is abomination in the sight of God,' whence he deduces, that God abominates rank, and therefore no Christian ought to retain it. It is not the *misuse* of rank or authority merely, but *the thing itself* which God hates, according to him. This convinces us that Mr. Hall does not hold God to be in any *direct* sense the author and ordainer of it, however he may deceive himself by the phraseology, 'ordained of God.' Again, p. 41, he says; 'Love has taught him (Mr. H.) to count the cost; and in truth he can say, it is sufficient for him to be as his Master: *how then can he retain a commission of authority, when the source of its power is the darkness of the world?* God knows it is not in harshness, &c. &c., that this is said,' &c. Mr. H.'s complaint is not that it was an abuse of power to put *him* into office; he objects to the power, barely *because its source is bad*. He proceeds: 'There are but two channels of authority, the power of the world, and God's ordained servants, the ministers of his Spirit. If I were of the world, it should be well that I should hold of the former; if the grace of my God has translated me *out* of it into his kingdom, to be led of the Spirit is not only my privilege, but I should err in holding power from *another*,' &c. &c. No doubt, after this, Mr. H. adds warnings to prevent it from being thought that he is a radical or a regicide, bowing himself to the sovereign as to 'God's anointed,' and declaring {80} that 'power is of God, and *not of the people*;' [not of the *devil*, would be more to our purpose;] which passage is now quoted by this Brother, as convicting us of falsehood! Truly, it may prove that Mr. Hall is an ultra Tory, who (under the belief of that religion demands it), inculcates political principles subversive of the existing constitution of this realm; but so far it entirely supports and does not contradict our statements. Indeed, nearly all this Brother's quotations are to no purpose; for they do but re-echo certain phrases of Scripture, while the real question is, how those phrases are interpreted – 'All power is of God,' 'ordained of God,' &c.

We must here go a little deeper. Two classes of things are ordained by God. First, all the moral relationships; marriage, family ties, social duties; private rights – the right to one's own body, and to the fruit of one's own labor: mutual duties of Christians. These things so emanate from the will of God, that we count them therefore good, because ordained by him. A Christian errs greatly, who thinks himself 'too holy' for the marriage tie, or for menial service; for that true virtue to which he is called, consists in rightly performing all these common duties. But, secondly, God also ordains the calamities and the minor trials of the physical world, the fierceness of beasts, the power of banditti, the revolutions of empires. *All these are to work together for good* to the Christian; yet he never infers that they are therefore intrinsically good because God has ordained them; nor is any moral or holy relationship found in any of these things. We have often heard some of the Brethren entitle the former, ordinances of God's grace; the latter, ordinances of his providence.

Our question is, To which of these does civil authority belong? If to the former, then obviously the relationship of ruler and subject, is very similar to that of master and servant, or parent and child. In *all* such relationships we must obey God rather than man. If a child is ordered to steal or lie, he must disobey; if a servant be employed as an instrument of profligacy, he must leave his place; and so must a civil magistrate, if ordered to assist in idolatry. But no servant who leaves a wicked master, is right in denouncing the post of a master (or of a servant), as one intrinsically unlawful to a Christian; nor, by

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\* On a recent occasion, the writer had a long discussion with a much esteemed (Plymouth) Brother, who, on the ground of this text, maintained unflinchingly, that *God abhors natural talents*. Of course it proves this, if it proves Mr. Hall's point. The context seems to demand the rendering, 'That which exalteth itself among men,' &c. &c.

analogy, is it right to teach, that a Christian may not be a responsible officer, higher or lower, barely because many rulers misconduct themselves; and much less, *if any* (as these Brethren) *disavow their right to judge of the conduct of rulers.* (p. 508, l. 40.)

That Mr. Hall, and all his party, should disown this analogy, appears absolutely required by their arguments. We do not find that they vindicate magistracy, as *a righteous institution*, founded on mutual benefit; the superior giving protection, the inferior {81} repaying it with honor and service; and we are sure that many of them (as the above quotations show), are strongly opposed to this view. Mr. H. represents a Christian as wholly *passive* towards the government. If commanded, he submits; if ill-treated, he endures it; if taxes be demanded, he gives them. A Christian servant pays *active* service to his master, by voluntary zeal even supplying what has been forgotten to be commanded: but a Christian subject (they hold) becomes *a worldly character*, if he display a desire to benefit the community by any voluntary exertions. Mr. H. enforces the duty of submission to the magistrate, not by insisting on his abstract moral claims on our help (which is St. Paul's argument), but by the dry appeal to authority: the Scripture has commanded it! – the same reason which he would urge for submission to a robber. It appears to us therefore most clear, that Mr. H. (though perhaps unconscious of it through want of mental analysis), does *not* hold magistracy as co-ordinate with the other social relations, – as an appointment of God's grace, intrinsically righteous, – but as collateral with the ordinances of Providence, hurricanes or revolutions, under which we are to be resigned, with full belief that they are permitted for our good; and that the theory which is implicated in his arguments, degrades civil authority. At the same time, the Brother who writes in the Inquirer, asserts (and quotes to the same effect), that, 'As *holders* of power, magistrates are the ordinance of God; though in their *use* of power, they *may* be the servants of the devil.' The words *may be* are highly significant, and if followed to their just results, obviously destroy the Brethren's whole system. But as the Brother agrees to all Mr. H.'s practical inferences, this sound principle is an idle theory with him.

Through some want of attention, he has understood us to say, that WE 'should be subject to a cut-throat, *if by God's permission our ruler*, only for wrath, and not for conscience' sake:' but the words in italics are his own insertion, and utterly reverse our sentiment. As he pointedly asks one question, we reply – that 'in Nero's days' we should have thought it our duty to obey, to suffer, to bleed; revolution would have been a guilty lottery, issuing at best in a change of masters. We think that it is in *moral* force that the strength of Christians lies; and that it would be in us an ungrateful return to God's mercy, to make light of the blessings of English citizenship. If unrighteously invaded, we may legally and boldly defend them, as Paul defended his Roman citizenship. This Brother most unjustifiably pretends, that we are offended because the Brethren will not use swaggering and insolent language towards the government; he treats us as promoters and lovers of *rebellion*, who are barely kept down by force! Truly the Quakers, with whom we contrasted the Brethren, are not wont to bluster; {82} nor does any one fear their muskets and pikes. Is this Brother so staunch a Tory, as to be unable to conceive of such a thing {as?} moral influence upon political measures? Does he imagine that all the affairs of nations are determined by bribery and physical force? We, on the contrary, believe that a nation which contends for the rights of others, by words of truth with disinterested zeal, strengthens its own liberties thereby, better than could be done by successful insurrection.

Yet we do not believe that Rom. xiii. was written to dissuade Christians from seeking to promote a political revolution. Since the failure of Brutus, it had become clear to every man of intelligence, that the Roman empire afforded no materials for any thing but a despotism; and it is quite unlikely that Christians should have conceived the idea, and that

Paul should have needed to check them. And had he done so, it could not have been by such reasonings as he uses. For instance, of what avail would it have been to plead *the important uses and benefits of magistracy*, in order to dissuade the Whigs of 1688 from ejecting that *bad* magistrate James II.? Such an argument must have been directed against those who looked on magistracy as only ‘the law of the stronger;’ – a familiar opinion in Greece; – or, as a violation of Messiah’s higher authority; in which latter light it would occur to Jewish Christians and their disciples. Against such the apostle vindicates it as a righteous and useful institution, to which their own conscience ought to teach them the duty of submitting.

Now we maintain, that, among ‘the ordinances of man, to which we are to be subject for the Lord’s sake,’ is that ordinance which invests many Christians with the political franchise, and some few with a peerage; and that a Christian’s duty is to exercise this, ‘as to the Lord, and not unto men:’ setting to all men an example of incorruptibility, justice, truth, candor; with a view to which, a certain knowledge of public affairs is to be sought after. If circumstances prevent this, it is better to give no vote, than to give it at hazard; but no Christian is justified in the course pursued by these Brethren, of condemning all as ‘worldly,’ who seek the present good of their fellow-men by means which God has ordained. What sort of vituperation would be heaped on *us*, if we made in any thing else as little of Paul’s opinion and judgment, as these Brethren make of it in the matter of worldly citizenship? At Philippi, at Jerusalem, at Cæsarea (after two years’ imprisonment for meditation on his former act), this apostle deliberately repeats that which they so condemn in us. He counted himself still a citizen of this world; so do we count ourselves. There is not a hint in the Scripture to imply that Paul sinned in this matter. Surely a little modesty or candor might make them suspect, that when Paul’s *conduct* appears to them so erroneous, (83) they probably misunderstand his *doctrine* also. Moreover, when he has broadly laid down that magistracy is a righteous institution, according with the will of God, it is evident that the burden of proof rests with those who say that no Christian can lawfully be a magistrate. This Brother, and all his party, urge that there are no directions in Scripture how a Christian is to conduct himself as a magistrate – as though that made it unlawful! But in this, as in most other matters, our controversy with them is concerning the laws of interpretation, of which we shall speak presently.

We profess to this Brother, that we regard his party to be peculiarly reprehensible, as practical promoters of oppression. They have not the excuse of ecclesiastical Tories, – many of them most deeply sincere persons, – who so dread the loss of the Church Establishment, that, to support this, they forget every thing else; for the Brethren hold the Establishment to be a prodigious and most evil fiction. Yet they throw all their *moral influence* on that side, which has for a length of time past favoured oppression and iniquity, bloody and lasting wars, grinding taxation, burdensome restrictions, church jobs, a cruel administration of cruel laws, colonial slavery, and Indian misgovernment.

If all English Christians held the views of these Brethren, the negroes of our colonies would still be treated as cattle, and far worse: and does Christ forbid us to utter our voice to our rulers against these enormities? Was it right to drink our coffee and sugar, – the blood of these men! – and plead conscientious scruples against petitioning for their release? and this, when it is notorious that our rulers themselves, unsupported by the moral power of the nation’s voice, are unable to effect beneficial reforms which they may earnestly desire? Truly this Brother greatly mistakes, in supposing that we are secretly ashamed and afraid to avow our deep disapproval of this baneful sentiment of theirs.

But we cannot allow it to appear as though the question between them and us were one of mere party. The Brother would have it believed, that solely because this Review

upholds reforming or 'radical' sentiments, do we object to their doctrines. It is not so. Radicals, Whigs, Tories, all alike repudiate the notion, that a Christian may not be a magistrate or a watchman; all alike regard it as a monstrous idea, that he may not help in improving the laws of the realm, or the public welfare and organization of the community; that he may not exercise the franchise or the right of petitioning. We have on our side all the good and great men, through whose exertions these Brethren now possess the gospel, the Scriptures, and freedom of conscience; and, first and greatest, we have the apostle of the Gentiles.

This Brother does not deny, but tacitly confirms what we {84} stated – that they hold it wrong to seek to improve the outward condition of the world. Their sentiments must lead to this, for social, civil, and political relations are not separable by any intelligible principle. May I not be a member of parliament? – may I then be a member of a town council? May I not be lord chancellor? – may I then be a commissioner of tithes or bankrupts? – or may I sit on a jury? May I not be conductor of the Post Office? – may I then be an excise officer? May I not sit in the privy council? – may I then be a member of an agricultural society? If it were right to produce individual cases, we could prove that leading Brethren well understand how far their doctrine must carry them, and do not shrink from it. One thing indeed is yet to come – the believing it unlawful to receive interest on money, or rents of estates. Certainly landed property has its duties, and must put them in a false position.

We have dwelt very long on the head of Political Rights and Duties, both from its own importance, and from the stress which the Brother laid on it. When he regards our statements here as 'utterly false' (p. 508), the reader may judge with what sort of discrimination he has declared, that we make out our case 'per fas aut nefas,' and teach that 'the means are sanctified by the end.'

II. Perhaps next in importance is the tenet of Open Ministry. This Brother before accused us of pretending that it consisted only in having a great *number* of teachers. When he comes to our explanation, that the main point of it is, not to put undue constraint on the energies of the Holy Spirit, he takes an opposite objection, that we unduly confound them with the Quakers. This, of course, was maliciously intended by us to imply, that the Brethren, as the Quakers, hold the Spirit to supersede and take precedence of the written word! (pp. 500–502.) Indeed, we referred to the Quakers solely as being a well known sect. But we were speaking of Church *Order*, not on the mode of ascertaining truth. Our words were, 'Namely, that the Spirit is still given to the Church in so emphatic and peculiar a mode, as to make all Church *Arrangements* for edification unlawful.' [We did not say, 'As to be paramount to the evidence of the written word.'] 'They do not attack bad organization, but organization as such.' The Brother objects, first, that he cannot understand the phrase *emphatic and peculiar*; which, he seems to suspect, conceals something wrong. We reply, that we wanted to avoid a verbal discussion about ordinary and extraordinary, miraculous or nonmiraculous gifts; and thought to do so best, by stating the result and effects, not the essence of these gifts; viz. that they supersede Pre-arrangement; indeed, render it unlawful. Next, he thinks we, rather craftily, confound arrangement and organization. Indeed, we regard the latter as somewhat more permanent than the {85} former. But what should we gain by this craft? For, thirdly, the Brother here declares that he approves solely 'of the Divine organization of the Spirit, and not that of modern churches,' p. 500; which of course must be meant to avow and defend the opinion which we ascribed to them: otherwise it would be a wretched quibble. But farther, he thinks we unduly confound them with the Quakers, when we represent it to be decided which of the Brethren shall speak, by the 'moving of the Spirit on the heart;' whereby (he says) we



throw out of sight that they believe gift and qualification permanently to reside in individuals. So far from it, that we believe the Quakers to hold the same opinion. Not every Quaker is a John Joseph Gurney. We many times spoke of their 'leading men,' and represented them as holding, that 'the Spirit is eminently in the few.' Observing, however, that the Brother again corrects this last expression, and wishes we had said, 'All gift and qualification for rule are ever in a few;' we have certainly been struck at this sensitiveness, and are led to inquire whether his notions of the influences of the Spirit differ so much from those generally acknowledged, as their phraseology has seemed to us to imply. Indeed, but for their views of the uselessness or mischievousness of mental culture, and the sinfulness of *all* error, we should incline to this opinion. If on this head we still misunderstand and misrepresent our Brother, we assure him it is unwillingly and inadvertently.

But let us hear his own account of open ministry. Note, p. 495. 'The real meaning of exclusive and of open ministry, is, I believe, generally little understood. It might not be the will of the Lord for a number of years to raise up in a Christian church more than one individual qualified to minister in the word. If, however, there was an open door left meanwhile for any upon whom it might please the Lord to bestow ability to minister his gift for the common profit, this would not be exclusive ministry. *But if in another church the ministry of the word were extended even to ten or twenty members, and then arbitrarily limited to that number, this would be that exclusive ministry which the Scripture calls SCHISM: 1 Cor. xii.*'

We should have feared to state the case so very strongly, lest it might appear exaggerated; but the Brother does not shrink from it. To reason with him may seem hopeless, when he is amazed that we regard this distinction as a trifle, in comparison with the peace of churches and brotherly moderation. We feel very strongly upon it, and spoke strongly. Because he cannot conceive of the depth of our feelings concerning it, he taxes us with levity; we might say, with profanity. But again we must appeal to our readers.

Do ministers of the New Testament spring up in a night? or are they gradually matured by time and exercise? We suppose, {86} from this Brother's language, that he holds the latter; but we do not know. Even if the former were true, it would not quench nor grieve the Spirit, to order that certain persons alone speak *in a certain building* and at a certain time. For if others were gifted, ever so suddenly, they would find, in another building, and to another audience, the opportunity of using their gifts. Who now advocates what Queen Elizabeth did, – the trying "to stop prophesyings" by outward force? Let the new prophets or teachers speak elsewhere: if their powers are remarkable, the church whence they came will hear of it, and can, if it please, make room for them. Its ordinances are not immovable, as of the Medes and Persians. – How much less then is an insult offered to the Spirit by the regulation supposed, if it be believed that ministers and teachers are not formed without time? This regulation may be *wise*, or *unwise*: that is not our question. But, have the Brethren a right to dogmatize, as they do, about it? – to call all churches apostate which judge otherwise?

This word "Apostate" is intended to have, and has, a real sting: it is not equivalent to *misjudging*. For, consider how the Brother deals towards churches which do not assent to his strange interpretation of 1 Cor. xii. 25, and his application of the whole chapter. He decides, first, they have left the apostolic model; secondly, they are apostate – their order is fleshly order, their union an insult to the Spirit; thirdly, he does not recognise the relationship between a pastor and his flock, or between church-members, as a spiritual reality, however truly cemented by the Spirit; but as mere fleshly formality. He would rejoice at its destruction. If the ten or twenty ministers were persuaded suddenly to abandon the flock and join the Brethren, would not this Brother glorify God that 'they had come out



of all systems,' without asking whether the ties broken were spiritual, or merely formal? This is what we meant by saying that they did not care 'what spiritual\* ties they burst, while pressing their theories:' for is not this quite a refinement of theory?

He corrects an assertion of ours, which implied that it is not lawful for an individual to collect *believers* (suppose to his own house) in order that he might teach them himself, and be the sole speaker. Our words certainly contained this, although we had only intended them as an emphatic re-asserting of the duty of open ministry, whenever they met *as believers*; which we believe is identical (in the Brethren's view) with meeting *as a church*. This Brother, however, says that open ministry is to be enforced only 'when they meet as a church *for the worship of God*.' We gladly publish this more correct statement of their {87} views; although we cannot conceive how 1 Cor. xii. authorizes them in this limitation. May not a church, if it please, meet for the mere worship of God, without having, at such time, any ministry at all?

If, as this Brother appears to think, their open ministry *works well*, we do not grudge it them, but are glad to have this and other methods put to the proof. Yet we think it clear, that an *unfair* advantage is given to the system, in a picked and therefore sectarian church. While the differences between speakers lie within narrow limits, so long (and only so long) are they bearable. But let the doctrine of Wesley (to give but one instance) be broached before the Brethren; let it be periodically and permanently enforced; and we are confident that they will either silence it – by persuasion, entreaty, authority; or they will quit the church themselves.

We know they will say, that this difficulty, though great, is hypothetical; and that their faith is exercised in looking to be kept out of it, as much as to be helped *through it*; nay, and hitherto have been so! We cannot allow this writer the triumph implied in his thankfulness for their unanimity; for it is plain that they have employed the surest *human means* for suppressing differences WITHIN their church. These are two: first, by using great strength (we say, exaggeration) of sentiment, which disgusts and repels all who do not embrace it; to which also their general intolerance of contrary opinions conduces: secondly, by securing that the chief power of mind should rest on their side. Their plan of proceeding is available to propagate truth or error alike. Some half-dozen men of education, and of energetic minds, coalesce, and assemble round them a number of females and of less educated men. Individuals who combine with them become assimilated to the pre-existing body; for a person remaining neutral and calm in the midst of them would be as a chill to their fervour, and in perpetual collision. If all (true) Christians joined them instantly – as they fancy they wish – their system would prove impracticable. But because all who disagree with them either keep away through kindness, or are driven away by disapprobation, – that is, because they are a sect, and *not* the catholic church, therefore alone it is that open ministry succeeds. Still, *in a sect*, and cleared from enthusiasm, it may be a very useful institution, for any thing that we are concerned to maintain.

III. We will next advert to an instance (p. 503) of his misapprehending us in a rather grave matter. Because we said that the Brethren held the law of Moses not to be our rule of life 'in any sense whatever,' he thinks that we are charging them with Antinomianism! Now in fact, not a feature which we have ascribed to the Brethren has any similarity to that odious error; and we particularly stated that their 'Calvinism was very moderate.' {88} It is the more remarkable, because this is one of the tenets which the writer of the former Article held 'to involve valuable truth;' and in a note upon their view of the Sabbath, in

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\* The Brother seems to think we meant *ecclesiastical*.

connexion with it, may be read: 'This is no peculiarity of theirs; *since it was held by all the Reformers, as well as in all times by the most learned writers of the Church of England.*' Did it need much study to discern that the writer agreed with them? Suspecting there might be a strong feeling against this among his coadjutors, he did not feel justified in using the editorial *We*; and yet (considering it to be a doctrine on which few use discrimination), he could not endure to permit it to bring odium on the Brethren, without stating, though dryly, a fact tending to disarm hostility. How the Brother, with that note before him, could suppose Antinomianism to be the thing imputed, it is difficult to say. But what did we mean by *in any sense whatever*? Merely, that *as a rule*, it was gone by entirely and for ever; and not (as some distinguish) a rule in moral matters, but not in ceremonial; or a rule of conduct, but not of justification, &c. &c. The Brother fully accepts for himself the sentiments which we described; but tells us that they are not altogether unanimous, while we had said 'we believed' they were.

IV. He complains that we 'insinuate what we dare not assert,' that they lay claim to the gifts of prophecy. We assure him that we insinuate no such thing. We desired, as concisely as we could, to point out the contrast between the Irvingites and the Brethren; the former holding that miraculous gifts *have* come and are *present* – the latter, that they are to be desired, prayed for, looked after, but are not (to their knowledge) come. We are certain that this used to be held by the Brethren, and not very long back; nor do we find that this Brother repudiates it. But, as we before said, he makes us suspect that their views concerning the Spirit have been modified. Perhaps they now think that no more gifts (in kind) are to be expected or prayed for, than they actually have at present.

Speaking of insinuations, we will add two other matters. He complains that we insinuated that they are *not* anxious to proselyte souls *to Christ*; because we spoke of their 'zeal to proselyte persons, not to Christ, but to a new system.' We cannot withdraw this statement: nay, we believe they will glory in it, changing the word *system*. But that we did not intend the alleged insinuation, might be seen by our broad statement, that they held they ought 'to preach the gospel, feed the hungry, &c.' In case any of our readers have not attended to this, we here distinctly disavow any such meaning. It would be very unworthy to imagine that no better motive than party zeal prompts their efforts to enlighten the ignorant and convert the abandoned.

Farther, when we spoke of 'pews or no pews,' as a thing on {80, recte 89} which they lay inordinate stress (as we deliberately think), we were not intending to beguile the reader into the belief that it was the mere pew, and not the moral principle of a private pew, to which they objected. We ourselves twice said, '*private pews*' and '*payment for pews.*' Those congregations with which we are acquainted, would object, as strongly as the Brethren can, to allow poor members to be excluded from convenient sittings, by the rich monopolizing them.

V. Another grand accusation. We hold in our hands a paper, which we believe has been widely circulated, entitled, "Some Explanation of the Views of certain Brethren in Christ." Therein we read: 'We hold that *no difference of judgment* or experience ought to hinder communion and visible unity among those who *love* our Lord Jesus in sincerity.' This is a statement which, we feel satisfied, the Brother will approve: as will all Congregationalists, except Strict Communion Baptists. Yet this principle is really more barren than it seems. At first sight, it appears to say, that a man's creed is *not* one of the elements by which we decide whether or not he loves the Lord; but that other means exist by which this may be known, and that, this having been ascertained, his creed goes for nothing. This sounds delightfully large: our hearts open towards it with desire, – we speak most seriously. We believe it is painful to every generous mind, to be brought back to the con-

viction that it is not possible to act up to it; but that there *are* points which, even as a bare creed, must be exacted. When this is allowed, it is clear that the proposition should be: 'No difference of judgment, *which is not such* as to induce the belief that an individual does *not* love, &c. &c. '; in which form it loses all its pleasant generality, and says no more than 'common dissenters' hold.

We remarked in our former article, on the appearance of 'liberalism or liberality' in the Brethren, which came to nothing in practice; and this was meant as an eminent instance of it. They find great fault with all others for enforcing creeds, confessions, &c., and loudly proclaim, (as something forsooth peculiar to themselves,) that 'no difference of judgment should hinder communion,' &c. Yet this, when checked by a second principle, is stripped of its grandeur. We exhibited the two propositions as follows: –

Every person claiming admission into a church must be received, *if* he is a partaker of the Spirit, be his opinions what they may. –

The wise and eminently spiritual may detect that a person is *not* partaker of the Spirit, by some deficiency in the Articles of his Creed.

The former is only that which we quoted above, with a slight change of grammar, and the word *opinion* put for *judgment*. We {90} have heard this proposition in a great variety of forms, and will not contest with the Brother which is best; for instance, that 'Nothing is to be inquired into, but the possession of the common life;' or, in Scripture language, 'We are to receive all whom Christ has received.' Now, (will our readers believe it?) this Brother actually repudiates indignantly the former of our two propositions; and next, accepting the latter as true, declares that we contradict ourselves! He says, 'First, a person may be a partaker of the Spirit, *be his opinions what they may*; and next, he may be proved not to have the Spirit, *by a defect in his Creed!*' Against such stupidity (we must use this term, as we would not think it wilfulness) it is indeed hard to contend. He quotes as our words, which we never used; viz., 'A person *may be* partaker,' &c.; which it would be utterly false to impute to the brethren. We used\* two hypothetical clauses, *if* he be 'partaker,' and '*be his opinions what they may*;' and this is what the Brethren themselves say, and what, we doubt not, this very Brother has often eagerly pressed. Certainly, before he charges us with falsehood, he ought to ascertain the difference between saying, 'No difference of judgment ought to separate those who love the Lord,' and, '*If* any love the Lord, they ought not to separate, *be their difference of judgment what it may*.'

Let it observed now, that the Brother leaves without remark the following sentiment, which we ascribed to them, though he closely criticises those on each side of it: 'It is unlawful to lay down any creed, as a test of communion, or as a test for ministers;' which we likewise stated in pp. 575, 583. Why does he not again tell us, that we are confuting ourselves? For (he might urge), 'First, a man may be detected as unspiritual, and justly rejected from the church, for a defect in his creed; and next, No creed may be laid down as a test for communion!' The inconsistency is theirs, not ours.

Believing, as we do, that their talk of imposing no creed is self-delusion, and that they really impose a precise one unawares – being remarkably unable to endure intellectual differences – we much wish that they would draw out a creed. It would then appear whether or not such articles as these must be believed, in order to admission to their church, 'It is contrary to our Christian profession to retain the rights of worldly citizenship;' and various others which we might name. But few notions, we believe, are more

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\* Thus if the order were given, 'Admit any genuine Englishman, be the color of his skin what it may,' the Brother might allege that this was to assert, that 'a man may be a genuine Englishman, and yet be as black as a negro.'

inveterately fixed in their imaginations, than the abstract wrong of test articles. Meanwhile, we must again {91} beg it may be observed, the Brother formally acknowledges that *some* creed or other is to be exacted, though he does not say *what*.

VI. We proceed to a kindred subject. We have given as among their current doctrines, to deprecate distinguishing between fundamental and non-fundamental truths. This is in fact an immediate deduction from the unlawfulness of Creeds, and *as such we represented it*. The Brother now opposes us by a very interesting passage, p. 595 (which we would quote had we space), on Unanimity, Uniformity, and the distinction of Fundamental truths. Only it sneers at ‘Creeds, Catechisms, and Confessions;’ which in this connection is strange enough, for the whole scope of it is really to prove the lawfulness or necessity of a Creed, so that it be a right one. But we beg to add this to the number of our ‘paradoxes,’ to hold that *they*,\* and not *we*, are here, as elsewhere, inconsistent.

Let us suppose a conversation between ourselves and a Brother (the substance of the following has more than once actually passed). ‘What is the Creed held by your church? – It is not our place to make Creeds; we hold it to be an undue assumption, and contrary to the mind of Christ. – But do not you hold *any* truths to be essential? would you admit a deist who seemed to be spiritual? – Oh! no: we would not. – It being then conceded that not all opinions or doctrines are admissible; if you *do not* know which are fundamental, what right have you to exercise church discipline and authority concerning such matters? but if you *do* know, is it not the duty of the church to instruct men in it? or am I really to understand that you know, but will not tell?’ When the conversation reaches this point, they† uniformly deprecate the attempt to divide truths into fundamental and non-fundamental, saying that it tends to disparage the latter, and more to that effect. And without for a moment impeaching the sincerity of this writer, we cannot get rid of the belief that he also would do the same. The texture of the logic is too close to admit of any other refuge. At the same time, we gave it to be understood, that they did not try to act on this {92} theory (for as such it must be regarded), for it is indivisible from the explanation of Heresy which we ascribed to them, of which we added, it was ‘a rule that could not be carried generally into effect.’

It is singular to see the art, or the simplicity with which the subject of Creeds is managed in the ‘Answers to a Clergyman,’ quoted by this Brother as exhibiting their views. The question is put, What are the Scripture Terms of Communion? and the reply is, ‘A Confession of Faith in those truths, *the belief of which constitutes a person a Christian, but without faith in which a person cannot be a Christian;*’ and this (i. e. faith) ‘manifested by a righteous walk.’ Thus, when asked, What must be believed for admission to the church? they reply, The things which must be believed for salvation: and decline all farther elucidation; which is about as useful as the Romish reply, The things which the Church believes. But this may show how vehemently they refuse to allow (in theory) the

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\* If this Brother, or any of them, will plainly admit that it *is* right to draw up and impose a Creed, we at once withdraw this.

† This Brother imagines we have heard them do so, when they meant to urge the “heartless ingratitude” of making light of the latter. We think it a very grave error to suppose truth to be unimportant, because not fundamental; but perhaps as grave, *so* to urge on persons that which is not fundamental, as to make them feel that there is no Christian sympathy or comfort for them, until their judgment be convinced. We here add, that we are satisfied we have read in one of their books, the statement formally made, that no one ought to mark off truth thus into two parts; but we cannot lay our hand on it, and indeed are unconcerned so to do.



right of the Church to dictate a Creed, while they leave themselves at liberty to be really as exclusive as they please.

Lest some of our readers misinterpret our own views, we must distinctly say that nothing is farther from our thoughts than to approve of fixed, traditionary, unalterable Creeds, which it is unlawful to question. Churches, as individuals, being highly fallible, must not assume airs of infallibility; but since in this matter they are called to *act*, it may surely be demanded that they act publicly, and that truths believed to be essential to the validity of a Christian profession, should be distinctly recognized as the basis of union in a Christian church. The minds of individuals may be much exercised and well-informed on the subject, but we apprehend it seldom or never is pondered by the great majority. When any new case arises, the church has simultaneously to form its general principles, and to act upon them; of course under no small excitement, if they are deciding upon the Christianity of an individual. It is our opinion (at least, the opinion of the immediate writer), that every increase of general intelligence and activity of mind upon spiritual subjects, will make this difficulty more and more formidable.

VII. On another subject, the definition of Heresy, we freely confess that we have been hasty in attributing to the Brethren generally that which is probably only held by some individuals. We stated that they taught Heresy to be '*the choosing for oneself* an opinion not according to the mind of the Spirit:' and that a person holding it is to be excommunicated, *because* Heresy is 'a work of the flesh.' This certainly is no invention of ours. We know it to have been maintained by one very conspicuous person among them for years; and it is our full belief that we have read this definition and explanation of Heresy in the Chris- (93) tian Witness, though we have not now succeeded in finding it. We certainly gave a prominence to this in recapitulating, so as to imply that it was held by them *generally*. But this Brother informs us that at their Clifton meeting, in June, 1838, they judged Heresy to be 'the evil activity and restlessness of the flesh in using false views as an engine of division, &c.' This is later in time than that to which we refer, and we do not doubt that he has rightly corrected us. We are sorry to lessen the cordiality of such concession, by saying that with his usual want of discernment, he neglects to observe that we ourselves distinctly stated that they did not, and could not, *act* on this doctrine, except in isolated cases. '*Could* the rule be carried generally into effect,' said we, 'it would split up the church, &c., &c.,' and then we proceeded {sic} to show that it was only in individual instances and on new comers that it would be exercised: and we see nothing in all this which we would wish altered. But the Brother formally argues out the impossibility of acting on such a definition of heresy, as if we had not already said the same thing.

But when he wishes us to believe that the Brethren would refer any case of this kind to the decision of the church, we are wholly unable to admit it. We deliberately reiterate all that we said concerning their determination to disavow the authority of the collected church, and their jealousy of its power. We know this as a fact; it is required by their sentiments; and it appears quite plainly in this Brother's own writing. He quotes the words (p. 508), 'It is for the brethren already in communion to decide according to the above tests, upon the title of those who propose themselves for communion:' which he contrasts with our words, 'Wisdom will be given to the few to judge of his character, but the sense of the church must by no means be taken.' *He omits our words which follow:* 'The church being always formed chiefly of babes and ignorant persons, must never vote *by the head* on such a matter.' This last omission was decidedly unfair, because he elsewhere (p. 504) admits that 'the sense of the church is not to be taken' by head-voting, which is the only thing of which we spoke; and he does not explain in what other way they proceed, when the church is not unanimous. Not but that we believe *every kind* of



authority in the church is disowned by them. There is an unfair ambiguity in the words *according to the above tests*; for one of the tests is, that the candidates be sound on ‘fundamental truths;’ and this Brother’s own extracts declare that the church may not set forth a declaration, *what* truths are fundamental: so that no test is really proposed. Suppose now a candidate for admission, who in other opinions agrees with their church, but who disbelieves the doctrine of *Preventing* grace as held by {94} Calvinists, or the strict eternity of future punishments; the real question is, whether the leading brethren will submit to the decision of the church, should it happen to be against their own. We can see nothing in this Brother’s writing to make us suspect that *he* would: and we are personally confident that many of them would not. Nay, he has not ventured to reject this statement of ours, ‘If any Brother in his public teaching, utter that which is false or unedifying, those who are wise must reprove him, and he must submit to them. For we are ordered to be subject *one to another*. *And if he do not submit, they must reject him as a heretic, after a first and second admonition.*’

But indeed, no other course is open to those who condemn democracy in the church, who forbid even that a congregation shall choose its pastors, and *yet* refuse all fixed official authority. It must remain that strong-willed individuals be uncontrolled, as much in censuring and excluding from the church, and in other public acts, as in their private capacity. We do not dissemble the *difficulties* of democracy in the church. St. Paul found them at Corinth. But these Brethren are deluded, if they suppose that their own system is any thing else. There is no middle thing (such as they dream of) between formal and informal church order. An amalgamation of the two may exist, but nothing differing in kind from both. The formal, which recognizes official authority to decide things spiritual – as, who shall teach, or what shall be taught – they repudiate: the informal can be nothing but the democratic system, viz. ‘a legal equality of all;’ in which, consequently, there is no rule but that of opinion, no influence but that of persuasion, or perhaps, blustering. Tell us not of gifts. It suffices not to have such gifts as Paul, *unless the possessor is believed by others to have them*.\* The apostle John was overpowered by the influence of Diotrephes. When therefore the Brethren impotently condemn the democracy of dissenters, they only show their love of finding fault; or else, a miserable desire of irresponsible power. This is like the old giant ‘Pope’ in Bunyan, who, being chained, could do nothing but show his teeth. The utmost that he can obtain, is a sort of Arab despotism, which may exercise any acts of power on those without, so long as it is lenient, and upholds its popularity with those within the tribe. {95} It might now seem needless to answer the Brother in the Inquirer, who adduces the text, ‘Obey them which have the rule over you,’ as a condemnation of democracy in the church. Does he know what ‘democracy’ means? perhaps, being a Tory, he supposes the word to mean ‘tumult.’ But we believe that *he* expounds that text, as all other Protestant Dissenters do; viz. that, ‘after judging, as best we may, *who are* the persons to whom we are to be subject, then we are to obey them *within reasonable and lawful limits*.’

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\* In the Christian Witness, vol. v. p. 81, it is confessed that the democratic system appeared almost immediately on the departure of the apostles; but this is treated as a manifest and grievous error – natural in a high churchman, but absurd and self-contradictory in one who will not allow that the Apostles had any formal successors, and who holds that it is the duty of each Christian to prove and try every one who calls himself a minister of Christ. The truth is, that Paul’s own system was democratic. Only *his personal qualifications* sustained his authority in the churches; and he says, ‘If *we* or an angel from heaven, &c.’

Before leaving this head, we must notice a fictitious contradiction which this Brother advances, by making us assert that which we did not.\* His words are (p. 504): 'The Brethren frequently take the judgment of the assembled church on *many* subjects, *though they are here said to hold it unlawful*. They find no difficulty in doing this, *without putting the matter to the vote*.' He does but confirm all that we stated; viz. that the opinion of the church is *not to be taken by vote*. In the same page (p. 577) we wrote, *vote 'by the head'*, using marks of quotation to show upon what the stress was laid by the Brethren. He has also omitted our expression, 'on any spiritual subject,' which was here important; for we are not aware that the Brethren object to voting on other questions; for instance, as to the locality of their meeting room; and we were careful not to impute it.

VIII. It remains to speak on literature and mental cultivation. This Brother informs us that they allow of the study of the original languages of the Scripture, but disapprove of literature. He speaks of *philology, rhetoric, &c.* as condemned in Scripture (note to p. 503), and again (p. 514), gives us insight into the breadth of his prohibition thus: 'The Brethren object to *worldliness*, whether religious or otherwise; and regard politics, literature, exclusive ministry, &c., as so many forms of it.' We beg to call our readers' attention to the portentous *et cætera*.

We were *not* ignorant of this distinction, yet we must justify him in supposing that we were; and both to correct misapprehension in the reader's mind, and for the importance of the thing itself, we are glad to recur to it now. Embarrassed by the multiplicity of subjects, we not only did not give this distinction its deserved prominence, but certainly wrote one sentence in forgetfulness of it. Yet we know not how to make to the Brethren an {96} apology worth giving or receiving, since the substitution of the words 'Philology and History,' for 'Hebrew and Greek, will leave the point of our remark as sharp as before: viz., that in theory they despise, but in practice seek to use, these things. An unfortunate misprint of 'unlawful' for *lawful* (p. 578, l. 15), and the popular phrase 'Latin and Greek,' used for *ancient literature*, made our meaning yet more indistinct. Let us beg, at the end of this long article, for yet a little more patience, while we develop the meaning and result of the doctrine taught by the Brethren, that to study the bare languages of Scripture is right for a Christian, but to cultivate the mind is wrong.

We must explain what, in our last quotation from the Brother, is 'religious worldliness;' and it may illustrate to him what we meant by saying that they judge the Scriptures by other than the common laws of grammar; – words which he does not understand. We are used to speak of the religious world, or the Christian world, or the Protestant world, as freely as of the musical world or the mineral world; and judged by common grammar, all are equally good. But the Brother decides that *the Christian world*, is a contradiction; being, it seems, equivalent to *worldly Christians!* He three times attacks us about it, as in the note, p. 515: 'There is nothing self-contradictory in the expression *religious world*, for man is naturally *religious*; but that of *Christian world* is sadly anomalous, and like popular phrases, fearfully expressive of the existing state of things. Surely it was never intended that the terms *Christian* and *world* should be named together, save in the way of *contrast*, or meet together save in the way of *conflict*. And yet they are now found joined together in all *seeming* harmony.'

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\* Not to omit what is yet unimportant enough, we add that the Brother corrects an ill-formed sentence of ours which certainly represented them as thinking it right to break bread *several times* on the Lord's day, if the church met several times (p. 576). They think once is enough, but that it should be at least as often as once on every Lord's day, that is, once a week. This is what we had ourselves intended.

We are afraid to call this a specimen of 'divine grammar,' for it really might be mistaken for profanity. But is it not miserable to see religious feeling degenerate into this mawkish sensibility about words and syllables, with such a loss of the common powers of reasoning, in one who has not been ill educated? It is hard to predict from what absurdities in Biblical criticism a person would shrink, who has so perverted his faculties as to expound the Christian world to mean worldly Christians. To such a mind, the knowledge of the mere languages, Greek and Hebrew, is an *ignis fatuus*, if indeed\* this is a specimen of other criticisms. But who need doubt that their critical principles {97} must be *other than common*, when this Brother reckons *Philology* among the parts of 'worldliness' to be avoided by Christians? We have not room to enlarge on this absurdity. But surely, all who know anything of antiquity, know that to appreciate the force and spirit of an ancient tongue, far more is needed than the bare letter which a dictionary can afford. What we intended to ascribe to the Brethren is this; a superstitious feeling concerning the dialect of the Scriptures, as though 'the words of the Holy Ghost,' were not also human words subject to the same laws as those of common men: hence they have a horror of all explanation depending on *figures of speech*,\* however convincing may be the proof at hand, that this is the real interpretation; and when they compare Scripture with Scripture to find the force of words, it is less because the dialect happens to be the same in the books compared, than to ascertain how 'the Holy† Ghost' employs terms. Nay, they appear to dread the study of common Greek, as though it would mislead them as to the SS. We believe this to be a most hurtful error, tending to promote superstition with some, infidelity with others; and destroying in numberless cases the true sense of the sacred volume.

This Brother complains that we do not rest our opposition to them on texts of Scripture. His complaint touches the heart of the subject, and *assumes* that which we are strenuously denying; viz. that all knowledge available or useful to a Christian is contained in the Scripture. What a confusion of mind it implies, to imagine that *the laws of interpretation* can be dictated by the Scripture, when every text quoted on the subject, needs to be itself interpreted before it can be used! Our main controversy with these Brethren is concerning laws of interpretation, laws of argument and evidence; we contend that they have heated imaginations, and are deficient in sound sense. We understand this Brother's texts very differently from him, and our controversy can never be thus settled. The publication of the letter of Scripture is a vast blessing, because so much holy and most important truth is on the surface; about which there is little question among Christians. But three centuries in this country have fully demonstrated the falsehood of the old maxim, *Bonus textuarius bonus theologus*. A MIND to interpret the texts is {98} first essential, and no text-quoting will separate man from his intellect, or the spiritual from the natural understanding. That there may be life in the letter, we need not only to have our religious feelings quickened, but also our mental faculties soundly developed. Yet these Brethren virtually teach, that

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\* It may seem to be a *morceau* much valued in their school; for in turning the pages of the Christian Witness we have met the same idea more than once. Thus, vol. i. p. 350, Note, where somebody is rebuked for wishing universities to be a *preparation and introduction to the world*. We should refer to John xvii. 15, but text-quoting between us and the brethren is useless.

\* The Brother does not object to our statement, that they hold that our Lord's maxims must not be modified by considering their Hebrew idiom. We might as well say, that English is to be interpreted 'by the laws of grammar, without reference to the English idiom.'

† The Englishman's Greek Concordance, favourably noticed in our November Number, is executed by the Brethren. We did not choose there to stir the question, but barely glanced at it.

the weaker a man's perceptive and argumentative powers, the more likely is he to attain divine truth.

Since this Brother does not object to our statement that they regard history as a 'worldly' study, we presume that he includes it in the *et cætera*. Yet he (as they) has no objection to try his hand at historical argument, in the following words, p. 503, note: 'IT IS NOTORIOUS that mere literature has never done anything but mischief in the church, removing men from the simplicity that is in Christ. *As literature advanced and prevailed*, the truth became darkened, diluted, and mixed with pernicious errors, until at length it was well nigh extinguished. To the *learned* we may trace almost every heresy and false doctrine which has at any time plagued or desolated the church; and if we desire to see infidelity raging under the Christian name, we must turn our eyes to the neologians of Germany, who are admittedly in philology, mere criticism and literature, *facile principes*. And yet\* the religionists, especially the dissenters, of these countries, have failed to take warning from this.' 'Mere' literature, is doubtless a double-edged weapon, and so is 'mere' criticism: each may be mere counterfeits. But we do not hesitate to assert, that the facts of history inculcate the very opposite lesson to that which this extract is designed to convey. So far from it being true that the departure of the early church from the faith is chargeable on 'literature,' in any sense which that word now bears, it may be difficult to suggest any accessible human means which would have more efficiently resisted that sad declension, than the general study of Cicero, Xenophon, Tacitus, and other sober classical authors, by Christians of the second and third century. The disease of the church was fanaticism, credulity, and superstition; an obscuration of the primary notions of morals, and a loss of common sense. *The Scriptures were in the hands of all, but none could use them aright*. It is most certain, that the decline of literature and sound judgment in the age at large, went hand in hand with the decline of true religion in the church. Farther, the spread of Latin (*heathen*) literature in Europe, was the dawn of religious improvement in the middle ages; while the introduction of Greek (*heathen*) literature was the herald of the Reformation. Since then, if we ask why it is [99] that *we* discern many truths more clearly than our fathers; why we do not believe their demonology, nor their astrology; why we burn neither witches nor heretics; why we do not abuse the Old Testament to the same extent, and use it to justify crusades; why, in short, we are beyond them in the discernment of any point which can be boldly pronounced to be The Truth; the only answer is, because *the mind of the age* is somewhat more cultivated. It is not by a larger outpouring of the Spirit; for the unspiritual partake in this light. Had not astronomy and other physical science dispelled the superstitions but recently general, these very Brethren might be now deciding causes of witchcraft by texts from Moses, or fighting battles with demons like Luther. Errors pardonable in the uneducated, are by no means so in *them*; and least of all, while the FACT remains, that those among them who by superior capacity and cultivation would in any worldly society take the lead, are also The *Gifted* and Ruling men in their church.

So widely do we differ from this Brother's axiom (for as such it must be regarded), that philology, rhetoric, literature, et cætera, are *worldly* things in his sense, that we believe all honest exercise of the mind to be a truly religious matter. As the firing at a target forms an expert archer or musketeer; so the seeking after truth and nothing but the truth, in common every day topics, imparts to it a *habit*, which it retains in spiritual inquiries. Nay, we believe that one who should attempt to confine his mind to the latter subject,

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\* It is believed that the Brother is by no means well-informed, nor is an adequate judge, concerning the progress of the German mind: but it is too great and arduous a subject here to touch.



would inevitably contract most vicious habits of arguing and investigating. For we have not the same ability to verify and correct the processes of the intellect, when veneration or fear press too heavily on the reasoning faculty. – ‘But the Brethren are so spiritual and so devoted, they surely would not be allowed to go wrong;’ says each concerning the rest. We reply, the most *devoted* men that ever lived, yes, and the most unworldly (if this is spirituality) have been among the Roman Catholics, and those, very superstitious ones. Man cannot with impunity transgress the conditions of being within which God has placed him; and he who tries to be holy *out* of the world, instead of holy *in* the world, must soon fall into gross and mischievous errors, from which a little of the world’s ordinary sense might have saved him. Moreover, no declamations against Rhetoric secure men from using the lowest rhetorical tricks; no neglect of Ethics or Logic will serve to improve their insight into human duty, or their powers of investigation.

We must finally declare, that our own convictions have been much strengthened by the study of this Brother’s reply, as to the substantial justice of all our complaints against them. What indeed but the most exclusive principles and peremptory denunciations, can one expect from the advocates of ignorance? {100} Whenever he touches a point of difference, he displays this dogmatic temper. Thus (p. 507): ‘Neologically to explain the law of leprosy as a regulation of quarantine, or that of the avenger of blood as an adopted Arab custom, does surely argue a mind *very*, if not *utterly*, dark as to things spiritual.’ It is not our purpose to advocate any particular interpretation; but we must protest against the Brother’s supremacy over our faith. There is absolutely nothing in either Old or New Testament to prohibit what he is pleased to term the ‘Neological’ view; and whether it be true or not, can only be determined by that ‘general literature’ which he reprobates. If the phenomena of the oriental leprosy agree pretty nearly with the Mosaic; especially *if* there be two sorts, infectious and non-infectious (that is, unclean and clean); it would be irrational to reject the elucidation. The other question is equally connected with the laws of ancient nations concerning the exile of an accidental homicide.

As this brother is perplexed to know what we ever hoped for from them, and why we are disappointed, we will tell him. We admire enthusiasm, as we do the sportive bounds of a child, or the vehemence of youth. It is a noble power, stirring the heart deeply, the spring of every reformation; generally self-denying, self-devoting, connected with the highest principles of humanity. But its effervescence too soon sours into fanaticism. When it becomes intolerant – when, claiming private judgment for itself, it denies the same to others – when it is exclusive and dogmatic – when it proscribes all literature except its own productions – when it forbids the cultivation and strengthening of the intellect – when it shuts out intercourse with other minds, equal to its own in power, but differing in sentiment – our hopes of good from it fall indeed very low. Nay, another fear remains, that the distortion of understanding which it occasions may degenerate into pious frauds and cunning expediency, as happened with the ancient church. What are we to think of this principle (not repudiated by the Brother), that ‘it is a presumption to criticise the historical evidence for the canon of Scripture?’ what, but that they adopt an irrational assumption, barely because they must else renounce their tenet of the uselessness of literature and mental cultivation.

We complained of their ‘scornful, supercilious tone;’ this Brother now recriminates on us, as equalling their scorn. We have hereby been led closely to interrogate our conscience, and obtain the following answer. It is possible that we have been led beyond bounds in our expressions; to pretend otherwise would be to advocate our infallibility or perfection. But most sincerely do we feel, that not one of the Brethren’s sentiments that can be separated from intolerance would be treated by us with disrespect (however ill-



grounded we might think them), if they {101} were held with ordinary modesty. But to meet with this intolerance, this hatred of liberty, this virtual teaching that ignorance is the mother of devotion, from men who have themselves seceded and claimed the rights of conscience, and whose influence, whatever it is, depends on their education and their intellectual energy, – this certainly so fills us with pity and indignation, that the mixture is probably very similar to scorn. But whatever of this sort has been said, is directed not against the mass of their followers (whom it is not possible to know in detail), but against those who suppose that by the sacrifice of their estates or worldly prospects, they purchase a right to lord it over the faith of their fellow Christians. The only excuse which we know for them is a poor one: that they are so shut up among themselves, and hear their own thoughts so re-echoed, that they cease to be aware how magisterial is the place they have taken.

## THE ONE-MAN SYSTEM.

*To the Editor of the Inquirer.*

SIR, – The January number of the “Eclectic Review” affords no small instruction to those who are examining the workings of “a learned ministry,” – an educated priesthood, – and are comparing its boasted benefits with the free ministry of the Spirit in all believers.

The article which is headed “Reply to a Plymouth Brother,” has many subtleties on the subject of the ministry, to be accounted for, apparently, on this ground, that the writer of the article, though disapproving the views of “The Brethren,” has no fixed views of his own on the subject. He does not seem to be able to come to any other conclusion than this, – that the matter of ministry in the Church of God is to be classed amongst things indifferent – that peace exists in dissenting churches under the existing arrangements; and that, therefore, it would be wrong to invade that peace by introducing liberty of ministry. This seems to be his real feeling on the subject, for he only partially defends the dissenters, or the “One-Man” system, if, indeed, he defends it at all; for it is pretty clear by his expressions\* in a previous article, that he wishes to pass over, as lightly as may be, a subject which it is not very convenient to handle. In my opinion, he most clearly perceives that the one-man system is to be defended by the argument of expediency alone, and that it would be in vain to rest its merits on the authority of the New Testament; hence his light and shadowy sentiments on a theme which to the dissenters is indeed the substance of their whole fabric. In the January number he thus speaks: “Do ministers of the New Testament spring up in a night? or are they gradually matured, by time and exercise? We suppose from this brother’s language [alluding to an article in the October number of the ‘Inquirer,’] that he holds the latter; but we do not know. Even if the former were true, it would not quench nor grieve the Spirit, to order that certain persons alone speak in a certain building and at a certain time. For if others were gifted, ever so suddenly, they would find, *in another building*, and to another audience, the opportunity of using their gifts ... Let the new prophets or teachers speak elsewhere; if their powers are remarkable, the church whence they came will hear of it, and can, if it please, make room for them. Its ordinances are not immovable, as those of the Medes and Persians – how much less then is an insult offered to the Spirit by the regulation supposed, if it be believed, that ministers and teachers are not formed without time.” Much mystification is here introduced to perplex a very plain subject. The question is this, Are the Scriptures to be our guide in church order? are we to look in the New Testament for light in this matter, or are we to invent a system out of the ingenious contrivances of our imagination, suited, as we suppose, to the actual state and apparent exigencies of society? If we are to be directed by the Scriptures, we answer, that we know of no ministry “gradually matured by time and exercise,” according to the meaning of this writer; for in these words are included the whole apparatus of preparation for the pastoral monarchy of the dissenting churches; the preparation for the ministry, according to the Scriptures, is a knowledge of salvation through the remission of sins, and the reception, not of the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, to know the things that are freely given of God. He that is

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\* “We have no tears to spare for the absence or presence of a pulpit ... if we are too busy in straining out gnats, we shall presently swallow a camel: if we sigh and groan that not all Christians admit of open ministry, our hearts will become hard *on occasions really calling for sorrow.*” – “Eclectic,” May, p. 586.

stablished in Christ, and anointed, and has the earnest of the Spirit in his heart (2 Cor. i. 21), has been taught of the Lord according to the new covenant, {124} and the effect of this, in the matter of human teaching, is not obscurely intimated where this new covenant is mentioned (Heb. viii. 11).

Let us suppose these propositions of the “Eclectic” laid before the Church in the days of Paul; let us suppose that some one recommended Paul and the Corinthians, first of all to admit those only to the ministry who were “gradually matured by time and exercise” – that is, learnedly educated, and for a long time practised in the construction and delivery of sermons – then to order that “certain persons should alone speak in a certain building, at a certain time” – but that if others were “suddenly” gifted, as they supposed, by the Spirit, they should go and utter their gifts in “another building,” waiting for the Church to “hear,” by general report, if their powers were “remarkable,” and then to “make room” for them: – what would have been the answer of the Corinthians to such a suggestion? and how does this fantastic imagination represent the order that we find in 1 Cor. xii.?

The “Eclectic,” however, assures us that this “supposed regulation” would offer no insult to the Spirit, a sentiment so strange that it may be left without any comment to illustrate fully this writer’s apprehension of the things that belong to the Spirit.

In this same number of the “Eclectic” there are two other articles, “The Dissenting Theological Colleges,” and “Porter’s Lectures on Preaching,” from which I would make a few extracts: –

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SIDETES.