

REASONS

FOR

RETIRING FROM THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH.

BY CHARLES HARGROVE,

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SECOND EDITION.

CORRECTED AND ENLARGED.

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I WISH briefly to state wherein this edition differs from the last. The introduction is new, also the notes inclosed in brackets, and further, there are a few additions in the body of the work, chiefly in pages 76 to 80, 87, and towards the close—there is no change in the sentiments, or principle of the work.

The word “Church” is occasionally used not in its true acceptation, but as it is in common parlance, as we say the Church of Rome, the Church of England, &c. not that I mean thereby to sanction the propriety of the word as thus applied, but to avoid circumlocution where custom has made the usage familiar.

In considering the interpretation of John xiv. 28, 30, in p. xx. of the Introduction, I wish to add, that whether the coming of Satan refer to our blessed Lord’s approaching agony and trial, as some may interpret the passage, or to the increased power of

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Satan over the world, by its rejection of the Son of God, the conclusion is unaffected—he is still the “prince of this world,” as Scripture abundantly testifies, and experience too sadly proves.

I would further only add, that this little work was originally published in Ireland, and therefore when such expressions as “this country” occur, as in the note p. 83, or similar allusions, the reader will remember that Ireland is intended.

CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION.

	Page
Reasons for another edition	i
Note—Party names—prejudice	i - iii
General notice of publications in reply	i - v
Note—Misrepresentation	iv
Not unwilling to have my principles tried by the severest test, only let it be a scriptural one	vi
Note—Mr. Ryland's book	vii
Why I do not more formally consider replies	viii
The great evil of the Establishment, confounding the church and the world,—tends to perpetuate Satan's device, to give a religion without life	x
Distinction between the world, and worldliness in the church	xi
Question of judgment	xii
Necessity of judging principle and conduct, not mind or motive—God's will that we should do so	xiv
One of the evils of the denial of judgment, is, the hindrance to communion	xv
Communion of saints, blessed—a means of communion with God	xv, xvi
Abuses of my pamphlet, perverted to a party purpose— (Phil. i. 27 ; iii. 20)	xviii xix
Quietism—Mysticism	xx
Represented as a convert to Romanism—opinion of it to Irvingism	xxi xxii
The evil of Irvingism, it dishonours the person of Christ.. it dishonours the word	ibid. xxv - xxviii

	Page
Their testimony to the church, and not to the church's Lord	xxvi
The tongues—women's ministry.....	xxvii
Error in principle, generally the introduction to the delusion	xxix
Its character from an unexceptionable witness	xxx
Deprive themselves virtually of the remedy—the word, xxx - xxxii	
Its power of adaptation.....	xxxiii
Their prayer for the Spirit, "as what they had not," exposed them to the delusion into which they fell.. xxxv, xxxvi	
Edward Irving	xxxvii
The low and divided state of the church generally, tended to draw many saints into the delusion	ibid.
The charge of novelty.....	xxxviii
Testimony of Neander as to the apostolic church.....	xxxix
Do we reject ministry—God forbid.....	xl
Antiquity of error—the word the only sure foundation, note	xlvi

REASONS FOR RETIRING FROM THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH.

PART I.

	Page.
Reasons for writing	1, 2
Marked distinction in the scripture between the church and the world	3
<i>First Reason</i> for retiring from the Established Church—its worldliness—the identity of the church and the world ..	2 - 5
Not to be remedied by discipline	5 - 8
Nor by the faithfulness of the minister	9
Source of the evil—union between church and state.....	10
Headship of the Churches of Rome and England	11
The evil manifested in the appointment of bishops.....	11 - 12
And in their worldly rank and position	13
In the controlling influence of the state	15
In her dependence on the legislation of the state	16
In her discipline—excommunication	17
In her provision	18, 19
Duty of submission—distinction between that due to the state, and due to God	19, 20

	Page
Quotation from the Christian Examiner	21 - 23
Argument for establishments, but not from the <i>Word</i>	23 - 26
Summary of the evil.....	27 - 29

PART II.

<i>Second Reason</i> for retiring from the Establishment, the <i>acknowledgment of evil</i> ,—distinction between the existence and allowance of evil	30
Evil in the baptismal service.....	31 - 37
in the application of the liturgy.....	37 - 38
False professors and hypocrites	38 - 39
Evil in the application of the burial service	39 - 42
Evil in the ordination service.....	42
Man's office acknowledged, God's Spirit not acknowledged apart from the office—succession	43 - 46
Summary of the evil.....	46
Want of enlightened conscience	47 - 48

PART III.

The defence of the Established Church, and objections to separation considered, Defence founded on <i>Profession</i> ..	50
What is profession?.....	52
Consideration of the Jewish Nation	54
Note on the privileges of the baptized	55 - 56
Defence from the consideration of obedience	59
Obedience is duty, <i>where it is due</i>	60
Not to arise in our own strength.....	62
"We see the evil, but we see nothing better"	63
"Which of the sects will you join?"—None; the Church of God only	66
Objection on the ground of Schism	69
"Woe because of offences"	71
Note on Rom. xvi. 17, 18.....	73
"Divide and conquer"—yes, divide God's children from evil, in order to increased union	75
Quotations from Chillingworth on Schism.....	77
Man's uniformity at the expense of the unity of the Spirit..	78
Many feel the evil, will they ask us to unite in it	79

	Page
Holy men in the ministry and good done—allowed, but not by the system, God will honour faithful men anywhere.....	80 - 83
Will you leave the communion where God blessed you?....	84
Her foundations laid in the blood of martyrs	85
The body of Scripture in her ministrations	87
“Do not leave her now, in the time of her persecution, and in prospect of reformation”—For what is she persecuted?	87
I am not to wait in evil for reformation of <i>which</i> there seems no hope	88
Scriptures adduced against separation.....	
The Tares	89
The case of the church of Corinth	91
The case of Judas	94
Proverbs, c. 24-21. Meddle not with them given to change	96
Growth, not change, the principle of life.....	97
Apocalyptic Epistles—Sardis	98
The end of these reasonings and objections—the defence of evil	101
How many of the things now defended, would be at the Lord's appearing?.....	101
Argument from <i>expediency</i> —making God to stand in need of our temporizing to effect His purpose	102
Address to the saints in the Establishment.....	104 - 109
Bible, not a book of plausibilities.....	105
To those indulging political hatred against the Church, no sympathy with such	106
To the unconverted	106 - 107
To those not in the ministry, and therefore, as they may think, free from the evil.....	107
Conclusion, general notice of replies	110
Separation unto God,—that His people be one.....	111

INTRODUCTION.

A SECOND edition of this Pamphlet has been repeatedly called for; and I know not why I should withhold it. My object was, indeed, attained by the first publication, as giving my reasons for the step I had taken in seceding from the Established Church; but if, without any effort on my part, a desire is manifested for a further circulation, I do not see that I am altogether justified in withholding it. I feel confident in the truth of the principles which it contains; and I do believe that their adoption by the saints would be for God's glory. This assertion of confidence I make, not in ignorance of the publications which have been sent forth in reply to me, of which I must say, that on my own mind they have had no other effect than that of increasing the conviction of the truth in which I stand, and of the error herein of my opponents. I believe that one confident in truth, would not have had recourse (he need not) to the means which have been freely resorted to against me, the accusations and nicknames,* the garbling and misrepresentations,

* This is a frequent mode of attack with some of our opponents; and so hurried on by his prejudice is one of them, that at one time he makes a dear brother of ours, after whom he is pleased to call us, our founder, leader, apostle, in fact every thing; but presently we are no better than a mere disorderly republican body. It is an easy thing to call names; but is it righteous? Is it christian? Is it the argument that savours of a good cause? I could, I dare say, were I to follow the example which has been set me—I could discover many a name offensive enough wherewith to brand my opponents, and that without going beyond the

the allusions to private letters and private conversations, and the greediness to gather up every idle gossip, and

precincts of their own communion; indeed, were I to adopt the same means which have been resorted to against me, I could set forth much that I believe would abash some; but this personality is no part of my object. It is, I trust with me, but a little thing by what name we are called. Our God will not esteem us the less; and His favour it is that we covet. Nay; in this, there may be a little of the cross for His name's sake; and if thus we be rendered more contemptible in the eyes of the world, probably so much the better. We may be getting nearer to our proper standing in a world that denied and nicknamed our Lord and Master.

Respecting the individual named, I would say this much, that when first *the little companies of believers came together in separation from the world*, with which he and I are now associated, and to which every believer, without any restriction, is welcome, simply because he is a believer, or accredits himself as such, by his profession and corresponding walk, our brother was then (as I also was and long after) a clergyman of the Established Church. So much for the assertion of his being our founder. And equally true is the assertion of his apostleship. Our dear brother we do indeed esteem and value, and desire to thank God for what he hath given him "to profit withal," and gladly receive from him according to his gift; but as to dictatorship and apostolacy (if thereby be meant any thing of apostolic power), we leave such things to those with their earthly heads and earthly successions, or to those with their still vainer pretensions. We know nothing of them in our brother, or in any other. The Spirit we desire to acknowledge in all His gifts, *whatever, wherever* they be; and further, the apostolic principle of subjection, one to another, in the fear of God. But, further than this, we know not. Equally unfounded is another origin given to us in a late publication, and copied into a religious periodical, in which we are represented as arising from the remnant of what is described as a very disorderly assembly, meeting in this city (Dublin) some years past. But this is all a little matter. I merely notice it in passing as a misrepresentation, one out of many. Our principles, and this is what is of moment, are, I believe, those declared by the apostles; and, further, I do believe, that since their time, there have been those meeting together in them, unknown probably to the world, or if known, then only to be despised. But this is as it should be while the dominion of the usurper lasteth, while Satan is the prince of this world.

A tract of the brother's to whom allusion has been made,

set it forth as characteristic of those holding the principles of the Pamphlet in common with the author.

published some time since, in "reply to an article in the Christian Journal," was, I believe, felt to be difficult of answer, but something it was thought well to do; and, accordingly, it is sifted for hard words and phrases, which are wrested from their connexion, strung together, and then sent forth in a twopenny form, as a representation of what? Of the author's opinions? no; even this injustice would not suffice—but of "our Separating Brethren's!" though the work was avowedly his own; and any harshness of expression, or unkindliness of feeling, which, I believe, it was the object of the tract to expose, he was alone accountable for. He who did this injury, well knew "Separating Brethren" to be as free from the evil he would expose as any other brethren upon earth. It is not my object, far from it, to defend all that our brother may have said or done. No; in excitement from unreasonable opposition, he may have said things, and given offence, that I am sorry for, and for which, I believe, were he now by me, he would authorise me to express his sorrow; but he is labouring far away, among those whom the Lord has called, even amid much trial and persecution, into the same principles of the "Separating Brethren," and this without any intercourse or knowledge of each other. While I defend not all that he has said, this I would say; let our blessed Lord's discourses be dealt with as was his pamphlet; let the apostles—let the faithful men of God of this day, or any day—and how may they not be misrepresented?

Another proof of the enmity to this brother, as well as of the blindness of prejudice, is afforded by the accusation, so frequently brought against him, of charging all clergymen with the sin against the Holy Ghost. Not seeing that this would involve his own eternal ruin, as having been once a clergyman, and, of course (if his charge was true) of having committed the sin "which hath never forgiveness." In a tract (and seeing the offence it has caused, I would it had never appeared) he endeavoured to shew, that the abstract notion of a clergyman involved the sin. Not that the clergyman committed it: no; this was no part of his assertion;—this he disavows, and of this he should not have been accused;—but that, in this dispensation of the Spirit sent down, *dwelling, and ministering in the Church from its risen Head*, the idea of clerical office irrespective of gift, where man was to minister because he was in office, and that without the Spirit; and where the Spirit could not minister by whom and as He would, but must wait upon man and man's office, and only flow through this channel opened of man,—our brother's view was, that in this

Often while my opponents entirely overlook what I have said, I find them strenuously combating what I have not said ;* but which they kindly say for me, and

principle was the sin involved, and not that the individual was guilty of it. I will not take it on me to assert that this is *the sin* ; but assuredly it is very grievous sin against the Holy Spirit of God.

* This is indeed the case to a surprising extent. So much so, that one would almost be disposed to question whether some of those who have answered my pamphlet ever read it throughout: attentively they certainly did not, for the alternative I am unwilling to entertain. I constantly find errors attributed to me of which I feel perfectly innocent, or have distinctly disavowed. I feel that it is a reasonable request, but a very important one, that people would judge of my principles by my own statement, and not by the statements of my friends who have replied to me. One instance only I will refer to—the continually repeated misrepresentation of our object ; as if it was the formation of a perfect church ; as if we expected a church composed exclusively of the Lord's people. This is again and again reiterated ; though again and again it has been disclaimed in these pages. See pp. 51, 92, 93, 101, &c. A perfect church, or a church composed exclusively of the Lord's people, is no part of our hope, whatsoever else it may be. No : I believe assuredly that there will be much of evil and infirmity till our blessed Lord come ; and much mixture in the church, of those who are truly God's children, with those who have only a name to live while they are dead in sin. This I freely acknowledge. This I have ever acknowledged. My hope is not in any perfectness in the church ; but in the coming of our blessed Lord to perfect all things. But am I, therefore, in opposition to the plain word of God, to sit down in the acknowledgment of evil ? Because there is, and will be, a mixture in the church, am I therefore to mix up the church and the world—Am I wilfully to unite believer and unbeliever in fellowship ? Because there will be false professors, am I to receive those who make no profession ? Because there will be hypocrites professing, but not possessing the truth, am I to recognise those who are openly of the world, living in its sin ? We do not object to the church because of there being a mixture of true and false professors in it ; but because of its openness to, and oneness with the world ; because the world is in it ; and those who use these kind of arguments would be sharp enough to detect their fallacy and futility if used against themselves. But the system makes them necessary,—what a load of evil does it not ? What a pity that in a day when the axe is laid to its root, and when the Lord is raising up and banding together brethren in

then demolish with a flourish of victory. These means—so very distressing in those whom one would esteem as brethren—are proof to me that he who uses them does not feel the cause he advocates sufficiently strong in truth, and these means have been very freely resorted to. Indeed, so far do our opponents seem carried by their enmity against us, and so general now is their opposition, that we might almost lay claim to the honour of “the sect every where spoken against.” One of them can so ill restrain his enmity as foolishly to publish his thanksgiving, that we are “a petty miserable minority”! But there is blessedness in this; it forces one into the experience of the preciousness of that word, “Fear not *little* flock, it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

I can confidently say, that I am not aware of having used any of those means (in truth I did not need them) which have been so freely used against me. I think, if I know myself, that I am not unwilling to have my

the common faith and common principles in different countries, and that unknown to each other, we should still see men of God so bound by its spell; putting forth their energies to support and uphold that which is so grievous to thousands of the saints, and which so hinders their communion, rather than meeting on the ground of the word, the large place where all saints may meet together, unhindered by the imposition of defective creeds and articles, liturgical forms and ceremonies, and excommunicating canons, binding on the conscience requirements, many of which, I believe, are antisciptural, and some simply indifferent, and should be left so. It is strange that those who have their Master’s honour at heart should be insensible to such things; but when the obedience which is due to the Lord is transferred to something else, it must be so; and transferred I believe it is, in measure at least, to the system, which, in my sorrowful experience with my brethren of the Establishment, I have found generally to rise above the claims of our common Christianity.

principles tried by the severest test to which they may be submitted ; and if they cannot pass the ordeal, then let them fall, and from me at least they shall have no helping hand. I only ask, let the ordeal be a scriptural one, and let there be fair dealing. Let what I have said be answered, and not the incessant garbling, perversion, and sneering, which, when mixed up, as constantly they are, with "my friend" and "dear brother," &c., are just sickening to the heart. I *may* be wrong, but I say it not in the hurry of excitement or novelty, but after the calm deliberation of nearly three years, that I know not wherein the principles which I have set forth are erroneous ; or, further, wherein I have misrepresented the principles of the communion which I have been constrained to forsake. I have made no mere assertion of her principles ; I have shewn them from her own formularies. I have stated no abuse which is not a notorious matter of fact. I have not misrepresented her, or visited on her the corruption of the individual, when she has not accredited the corruption by her passive endurance of it. I have the testimony of my conscience (and it is a blessed witness to have), that I am in this honest before the Lord.* I will confess that I find it very hard

* Such has been my object ; and yet my poor tract has not fared one bit the better. I have laboured after as kindly a spirit as I could towards my brethren ; but, so far as they are concerned, I find that I might have spared my pains. Objections *will* be made, till the Spirit of God make obedience to His word paramount to every other consideration ; but however I may fare, I trust that I may ever be kept from any other spirit.—As to the matter of my pamphlet, some have told me that my reasons are but a string of stale objections, and weak withal, patched up for the occasion.—This certainly is not very flattering ; but then, for my comfort, neither can I believe that it is very true.—My object was to

to believe the same of some of those who have replied to me : from their replies I judge ; but to their own Master I leave them.

state to my brethren the objections which weighed with my own mind, in arriving at the conclusion that I could not conscientiously abide in the Established Church, and not to dwell upon all the objections of which I was aware ; which would have swollen my pamphlet into a ponderous folio : though some will talk of a "microscopic medium" in discovering the abuses of the Establishment.—Microscopic !!!—This is too bad, but a man can see nothing if he will shut his eyes ; and this is the way of many. But such being my object, I have confined myself to two heads, and the answering some objections.—1st. The worldliness :—that as an establishment she is a thing of this world, and not of God.—2nd. The allowance of evil as exhibited in the baptismal ordination, and burial services ; where evil is so bound on the conscience, that one can only get rid of it by getting rid of the system. These I have plainly stated without going into the details of error which usually are dwelt on ; and this one of the reviewers of my pamphlet has noticed. One thing I can assure my readers, that new or stale I have thought all "my reasons" for myself ; but there is no pleasing some people.

Since the publication of this pamphlet, Mr. Ryland's book on Church Reform has come into my hands. I am sure that I have not stated the evil of the church in stronger terms, nor I believe in so strong as he has ; nor have I at all gone into the detail of error which he has displayed. I felt that it was not my object.—With very much of Mr. R's views I of course agree, but from the practical result to which his views lead him I altogether differ. However I am unwilling to press Mr. R. with the consequence of his views after his own, at least, candid confession. I would commend to those dissatisfied with my statements, Mr. Ryland's summary of evil in the Church. Here let them see the opinion of a churchman who has not separated, and here see that I am not altogether so sophistical and slanderous as some would make me out. But possibly had I not separated I too might have set forth details of evil with impunity. But hear Mr. R. By the way he must have a very "microscopic" eye.

"What do we gain by the party spirit of the preface to the liturgy ; the ill-selection of proper lessons, epistles, and gospels ; the retention of legendary names and allusions in the calendar ; the lection of the apocrypha, and the omission of the apocalypse ; the mention of feasts and fasts never observed ; the repetition of the Pater Noster, Kyrie Eleison, and Gloria Patri ; the wearisome

If it be asked why I do not more formally consider these replies: for this reason among others;—because so far as I have yet seen, I am willing to leave the issue of the question with such as will candidly and impartially consider the subject (and for others, reasons are useless), to what I have published, and here republish. I do not feel the demand for an answer. I believe, as a friend writes to me, that I have answered them by anticipation, and there is little *bearing upon the question* in any of the replies which have been sent forth, to which I could not refer to some page in my pamphlet as supplying the refutation. I believe that the principles I have set forth (though with much of feebleness and infirmity, I am most ready to acknowledge), are unanswerable; at least on the ground of the New Testament. And, therefore, do I find that the sources from which my opponents have derived materials for their different replies, are, Jewish analogies, traditionary sources, reasonings from expediency, and certain evil consequences very liberally assumed and appended to our principles. Indeed, in one reply, an expression which I have used of the New Testament, as “the directory of the saints in this dispensa-

length of the services; the redundancy and assumptions of the state prayers; the unsatisfactoriness of the three creeds; the disputable character of the baptismal and burial offices; the incompleteness and dubious construction of the catechism and of the order of confirmation; the inapplicable nature and absolution of the visitation of the sick; the imperfection of the commination service; the discordance between the prayer-book and Bible translation of the Psalms; the contumelious and offensive language of the state services; and added to all these sources of weakness, similar causes of inefficiency in the Articles and Homilies.”—p. 209.

tion,"* is the subject of continual sneer ; something very like an avowal, one would think, of inability to meet the question on this ground. I do believe, indeed, that it cannot thus be met ; and I doubt if there be one competent, by ordinary instruction and freedom from prejudice, to form a judgment, who is not conscious of this ; however he may see other reasons to justify him in his support of the system. I confess myself, under the belief, that if the system was presented singly to the true-hearted saints in the establishment, to each individually for his support or rejection, according to its intrinsic value, and without any knowledge how the minds of others were affected towards it, I do believe that thus dealt with by its own merit, it would not number one in fifty of those whom it now holds captive. But we all know how few will think for themselves ; or, when they do think, will act, when they have to go against the stream. In error, even as in truth, we are encouraged and strengthened by association ; and this is one reason why we see so many abiding in the established religion of the land under such grievous misgivings of conscience. They are countenanced and encouraged by others of character for wisdom and piety ; thus they endeavour to pacify

* We have been accused of slighting, if not neglecting, the Old Testament Scriptures. God forbid that we should do so ! we know that they were "given by inspiration of God, and are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," and those who are in the habit of attending our meetings, know how frequently they are the ground of our ministry, how we honour them unto this, for which God hath given them ; but we do believe that for instruction as to the church's standing, her privileges, and her hope, it is to the scriptures of this dispensation, and not of the last, we are to look as our directory.

the misgivings within ; “ they helped every one his neighbour, and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage.”

The grand evil of the establishment, as it seems to me, is the confounding what should be separate ; the Church and the world. The world is introduced into the Church ; and, in return for the favour, she is established and honoured by the world. They which, in God’s word, are distinct as light and darkness, are thus amalgamated. The world, all the while, continues unchanged ; it is the world still ; but the Church, by the unhappy union, loses its distinctive and blessed character. On this I have largely dwelt in the pamphlet ; and the defence of this is the principal subject of the replies which I have seen.

It is a master-device of Satan to give a religion without life and godliness. He knows that man will not do without something that he can call religion, to satisfy the craving of his conscience. This is fully exhibited in Romanism ; where we see great zeal for the system, but no life in the soul ; and, therefore, no power of godliness in the life. Now, the position of the Established Church, I fear, necessarily tends to perpetuate this evil. It practically forbids the separation of the saint from the sinner, or of the holy professor from the careless non-professor ; and thus it works double evil ; to the believer in hindering his standing out from mere nominalism, and thus hindering his communion ; and to the bulk of nominalists in affording them shelter in a name while destitute of the life and hope of the gospel. Here is what the establishment presents to us, and here is, I believe, sad evil. The Church is not the “ body of faithful men,” of holy pro-

fessors, as it should be ; but the whole congregation, professing and non-professing, except, indeed, as a profession may be made by the lips of the parish clergymen, or, as their names may be found among the baptisms in the parish registry. Thus are the great bulk judged ; not by their own intelligent profession, not by their fruits indicating its truth, but by this sad mockery ; sad and sorrowful indeed in its result. Thus, an ordinance of God (which I am accused of making light of, but which God knoweth I do desire to honour as I do every thing from Him) is, by its abuse, made a cover and justification of all kind of evil principle ; degrading His truth to a mere name and form, destitute of life and power ; endangering souls, and subversive of all true Christian communion.

One source of the evil is, I believe, the not distinguishing between the “evil world,” and evil and worldliness in the Church. The latter may exist, and probably does more or less in every church, and in every professor. The former is that which is in direct contrast to the Church, and from which the Church is a separation. Now, I find, that in meeting the charge of identification with the world, a common mode with members of the Establishment is, to dwell on the worldliness of some of the primitive churches, as exhibited in the apostolic epistles. This I do not deny. I could not, indeed, with the New Testament in my hand ; but I say, that while they retained, in many instances, a strong savour of the evil world they had but lately left, still they held a principle, the nature of which was to separate them from it, and which did so, and ever does so, as it

is acted on; and further, in practice also, in a measure at least, were they distinct; and to effect this increasingly was the object of ministry, even as it should now be in the true church. But how do nine-tenths of the members of the Establishment differ from the world, either in principle or practice. I am sure I know not. And here is the evil. Worldliness in saints may be corrected. It is the subject of correction by teaching, exhortation, rebuke, and discipline, as we see in the case of the Corinthian church, to which I have referred, p. 91-2; but when the world is let in and identified with the church, I know not what remedy is to be applied, but the separation of the saints from such evil association. There is all possible difference between the believer in ever so low a state, and those who are still of the world, unconverted, dead in sin. With the latter, our work should be to declare unto them the gospel, that they may be saved.

But it is said that we cannot now distinguish between the one and the other; that we have not the gift of discerning spirits; and that, therefore, we should not judge. This argument just makes for the unrighteous principle of confounding all who have been baptized in one indiscriminate mass, and calling it the Church, the baptized world! and this is the way which some have of honouring God's ordinances, reducing them to a mere lifeless letter, and thus confounding the apostasy with the church of God, and helping on the downward tendency of the nation to Romanism; but I shall not add to what I have said on this subject in the note, p. 55-6. As to our not having the gift of discerning spirits: admitting that we have not, this has nothing to say to the question;

the gift was not originally for the separation of the true children of God from the world, or to enable those who possessed it, to decide on the truth of such as presented themselves for admission to the Church. If it had been, we may suppose that none others would have been admitted; that false brethren would not have crept in unawares; or having crept in, would not have been allowed to continue. The gift, then, has just nothing to say to the question. It was, as its name imports, for discerning *spirits*, and not for deciding on the qualification of professors. And why may we not now distinguish between him who makes a profession of the truth, and him who does not; between him whose life manifests that there is more than a name in his profession, and him whose life denies it; between the clean and the unclean? What it is that prevents us from thus distinguishing more than those of old, I am sure I know not, quite admitting our exposure to deception, even as was the primitive church, and as the church will be till our Lord come; from this God only is exempt. "He knoweth them that are His." Our duty is to receive those that we know; those who are commended to us from our knowledge of them; and not to make our ignorance the bond of union; or a name, a cloke and excuse for our ignorance. The same Scripture, 2 Tim. ii. 19., that telleth us of God's secret knowledge of His own people, presents us also with their manifested character. "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." When we are acting on any principle in opposition to this, or allowing a name or form to invalidate its power, then we are acting in apostasy, and making an ordinance of God the excuse for it.—

But the very existence of a church supposes judgment; and every address and exhortation proceeds on this supposition, to those we judge called of God amid the alienation of the world; and every act of discipline is but the further exercise of judgment.—If it be only contended that it is not our province to sit in judgment on the mind or motives of others, most readily, then, do I concede it; and most earnestly would I exhort and caution brethren against it. But surely we must judge of *principle* as it is professed; if not, then what is our common Christianity, and how am I to discern between Christian and heathen morality? How between God's truth and the different shapes of error to which Satan has given currency? How even from infidelity, if I am not to judge of professed principle? And as surely I am to judge of *conduct*. What is principle without it? "He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify to Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." The profession of sound principles with false practice is just antinomianism or hypocrisy, as it may be: and therefore do I find our Lord sanctioning, nay enforcing the principle. His word is, "Judge righteous judgment." Again, "By their fruits ye shall know them." The Apostle's word is, "Prove all things: hold fast that which is good." How could they prove all things; how could they "try things which differ;" or "approve the excellent?" Without this judgment, how can they love the brethren; how discern them without judgment. Are not all Church associations and Christian fellowship societies just founded on this exercise of judgment. But in truth there

are few, if any, Christian people in the Established Church or elsewhere, who do not proceed on this very principle in their own private intercourse ; and thus justify us who act openly on the principle, and condemn their own practice of indiscriminate communion. We don't stand and reason on the propriety of separating from a drunkard, an adulterer, or profane person ; yet what is this but the exercise of judgment. But there must be judgment if there be faithfulness ; and just as we fail herein, will we bring ourselves under judgment of the Lord. I am sure I earnestly desire that all judgment be founded on God's word, and that whatever is not, be discarded ; I believe of the word that it is in truth God's very word, and therefore sufficient for us under all circumstances. I believe that it never will fail us ; though we through ignorance and prejudice may often fail it.

The practical evil (or one I should say, for they be many) of this denial of judgment, is the positive hindrance to communion. The saint needs communion. It is one of God's appointed means to him of blessing ;* and allowing for all abuse (and what good is there un-abused) it is still blessing, as many can truly testify ; and the loss of it must of course be the loss of so much blessing. The saint, I say, requires commu-

* It has been objected to us by those who cannot have communion in its church, that we make too much of it, and slight communion with God ; but God forbid ! we do indeed prize the communion of the saints as a blessed means of more intimate communion with God, and of more conformity to His mind ; apart from this, we little value means or ordinances. We find the object of John was to lead the saints into fellowship. But was it to rest in this fellowship as the end of their attainment ? No ; but in order to bring them into the higher fellowship — "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us : and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." 1 John, i. 3.

nion. It is the longing of the unselfish spirit within him, and which he has of God, to mingle itself with kindred spirits, and hand in hand to help each other up the hill, amid the opposing and conflicting hosts within him and around, with what our God out of his common grace hath given unto each. But where is he to get it in the Established Church? Why, he is directed for communion to the baptized members of his Church. This he feels cannot satisfy him. It is but sad and unfeeling mockery to the Spirit within him. He feels himself straitened and hindered by this unrighteous effort to satisfy his hungry soul with that which is not bread; and at length, as has been the experience of many, he sits down desiring it may be communion with God—but with His saints! ah! believing that there is no such thing, or unwilling to encounter the risk of seeking it where it may be found—and thus seeking to satisfy himself with some poor excuse, which while he utters with his lips, his conscience rejects as untrue. There seems at this day a growing desire among believers for communion; and this it should be the very joy of a church to foster among her children. This the Establishment *cannot*. Indiscriminate union of baptized persons, of parishioners, is her principle; and not communion of those who manifest the life of God. It *cannot* give to the longing soul of the saint what he desires; and *will not* let him find it where he can: at least will hinder him, as she may when his search extends beyond her precincts.* Most true and

* It is surprising the means which are used to hinder saints from communion, and keep them in the worldliness of the Establishment. Some time since, and it is no uncommon case, a disciple earnestly desired to hold communion with a few poor despised

blessed is her testimony to Christ in many of her formularies; and by the lips of many of her ministering servants. But he who through grace receives the testimony, and wishes to go on in holy fellowship with those who have had like grace, I say confidently, in the Establishment, he cannot. Communion of saints! Why, the very term "saint" is a nick-name and mockery with a host of those to whom he is directed for communion. I well know that while he is a member of the Established Church he may have communion, but not *with it*. He may, with one or two here or there, with a little select company *he judges* to be faithful out of the mass of nominalists around him; but communion on the Lord's

saints meeting together in the name of the Lord. Every argument was used in support of the Establishment and failed. The last resource was, "Go to church as your parent desires it, and look upon it as part of your cross." So, then, our cross now, it seems, is to act in deliberate violation of conscience, of what we believe God's will. I thought, I suppose in my simplicity, that the flesh it was which we were to crucify; but here I find that it is the Spirit. By this doctrine, I find that the cross is to continue to do what we believe to be evil, to gratify an earthly parent. Most readily will I assert, most determinately will I contend for, the obedience due to an earthly parent in all its fulness, with *this only reserve*, that it cede to the obedience due unto our Heavenly Father. When any authority whatever rises up to interfere with the claim of God, the Lordship of Christ, I know nothing but the word of Peter, "Whether it be right to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." If not, then I think it follows that our religion is to be, not what God teaches, but what our parent wishes, that it is to be a kind of hereditary heir-loom in the family. While I guard myself from seeming to countenance disobedience to parents, which I abhor, as I believe it is abhorrent to God; I would also guard myself from an opposite error; the seeming to countenance in parents the neglect of their children's souls, of what concerns their spiritual state. God forbid that I should do so; the principle is this, "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

day in worship, communion with his Church, in this he has none; for there he meets the world; a baptized world* to be sure, but as much alienated from God as any other section of the world. And in grief of heart but in faithfulness do I say it, that in the Establishment, and from a multitude of the Evangelical clergy too, have I found just the same opposition to the communion of saints in separation from the world, that I have from the clergy of the Church of Rome to the great doctrine of salvation through the alone blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I believe just for the same reason; because the obnoxious doctrines clash with their respective systems. Romanism cannot tolerate the glorious truth before which her little sacrifices, purgatories, and penances fall prostrate in the dust; and the Establishment will not hear of separation from a world to which she is so intimately allied, and so deeply a debtor.

I take the opportunity which is afforded me, of offering a few observations on the use, or rather abuse, which has

* "A baptized world." Even so it is with some. If they go under the ordinance it is enough. Why, we have multitudes of baptized infidels. Aye, and many that have been confirmed too. Are they members of the Church? I may be told that the church describes God's true children, and also describes certain offenders, whom she pronounces excommunicate "ipso facto;" but every one knows what a mockery all this is. She describes them, and suppose truly, but what then? Why, she will give all submitting to her ordinances credit for being what she describes, and will treat them as such; and as to excommunication, I never saw one so treated in my life, whatever or however many his offences may have been. Her description of the believer, and her description of the offender are alike disregarded; and so it must be. Whatever then she may assert as her principles on the subject, what I demand is her practice. What is principle without it? A religion on paper.

been made of my pamphlet. I find that it has been taken up by a party with which I feel no sympathy, to serve its purpose against the Establishment. With this I have nothing to do. But even in this I think I see her unseemly and worldly standing. I have been praised or reviled by different publications, in neither, probably, according to the merit of the case ; but according to the relation or friendship which they bear to the political position of the Establishment. To praise or reproach from such quarters, I desire to be equally insensible. I write not for the world, but for believers mixed up with a worldly system. With politics I meddle not : nor do I know of any political character which a church should bear connected with this world. Its business here is to witness for Jesus, amid all the alienation of the world, and that, equally apart from the din of its politics, as from its other pursuits and principles. I have lately seen a translation of Phil. i. 27, in which *πολιτευεσθε* is rendered "act the citizen." Well, be it so ; I do not object, though I see no necessity for the rendering. But in looking a little farther into the epistle, I see the character of this citizenship in ch. iii. 20. Our *πολιτευμα* is in the heavens—here is the true citizenship of the saint—here his calling, Heb. iii. 1.—here his blessing, Eph. i. 3.—here his standing as seen of God, Eph. ii. 6.—with his risen Head. Hence should he view all things ; from this holy eminence look down, and estimate them according to their value ; and descending hence to the arena of this world, to mingle in its politics, or follow after its honors, it is descending indeed. It is the heir of glory forgetful of his birthright.

This, I am aware, has been called quietism and mysticism, and what not. It is an old trick of Satan to give a bad name to God's truth, and thus discredit it among His people. His truth, I believe, must have more or less of mysticism to those uninstructed of the Spirit ; but to those so instructed, one would think that the heavenly calling and character of the saints should be obvious enough in the New Testament ; and consequently their separation in principle and pursuit from an evil world, where their Lord is rejected. I shall not dwell on the subject, but just note, in passing, a Scripture which presents itself. In John xiv. 28, our Lord tells us that He was *going* to the Father : in ver. 30, that the prince of this world *cometh*. Now, I would ask, in the dominions of which should be our heart and energies ? Whether should we follow Him, in spirit, where He was going, or in spirit, still abide where He is rejected, where His enemy is acknowledged. One would think, to a true and simple heart, the question would be easy of solution, even though there were no such exhortations as Rom. xii. 2, and Col. iii. 1, 2. As to quietism, I only say, let each one serve God, and serve his brother ; and further, if he will, be the servant of all men, in the position in which God's grace finds him, let him be diligent in his calling, with this only restriction, that his sense of duty lead him into no infringement of God's word. Let him take the Sermon on the Mount, let him take the apostolic epistles in his hand, and while true to the principles which he finds there, he may serve where he will ; in the court, or in the camp, or in the church ; in the halls of legislation, or in the marts of commerce.

I only ask, surely it is not too much for one called of the Lord, that when he finds any principle run counter to the word, any earthly duty making a demand which involves the slight or sacrifice of any truth of God, then that he will strike to the Word, and let the consequence be what it may. Here I believe is the one principle for every one naming the name of Christ, from the prince to the peasant. "If a man love me he will keep my word." I shall not say how I think this simple principle would thin those fair earthly domains, so far as the believer is concerned. But let every one be persuaded in his own mind, only let him see that it is by God's truth he is persuaded.

Again, I have far and near been represented as a convert to the Church of Rome; and this, regardless of principle, to serve a purpose. There is not in my pamphlet a syllable in praise of that evil system; but, in different parts of it, my opinion is very unequivocally manifested. I want no favour, by friendship with error. In truth, I thought, and still think, that in seceding from the communion of the Church of England, I removed to a greater distance from that of the Church of Rome than previously I occupied. I believe, in common with many, and with none more than a host of the Reformers, that the church emerging from darkness at the period of the reformation, did not, as she should, cleanse herself from the pollutions which, through a long lapse of ages, Romanism had gradually contracted, and which now she exhibits embodied in a system alike dishonouring to God and degrading and destructive to man. A system, all that is peculiar to which bears this character; its opposition to the one free, full, and perfect

work of the Lord Jesus Christ ; through which alone the chief of sinners may stand accepted before God.

Further, I have been largely represented as a convert to Irvingism ; or, by some, as on the stepping-stone to it. Again, I do believe that, as in the case of the Church of Rome, I have seceded further from it, than in the position I formerly occupied. And this too is, I believe, the judgment of the Irvingite party ; who, while they acknowledge the Church of England, her ordinances and successional ministry, have no favour for us who conscientiously separate from it as evil. Of that system I do believe, even as of Romanism (of which indeed it seems to be but a refinement, and to bear nearer kindred than to any of the reformed communities)—I believe that it is alike dishonouring to God, and injurious and insulting to His saints.

It is a principle, I think, that will easily be conceded as essentially founded in truth, that the tendency of whatever is from God, will be, to exalt the Saviour, and to humble the sinner. Irvingism just reverses the principle. It degrades the Saviour ; telling us that He had a corrupt nature such as we have. It exalts the sinner ; telling him that he may be holy as Jesus was ! Against this I desire to raise my protest and warning, feeble it may be, but earnest and decided. I do indeed believe, and here my soul finds rest, that Jesus, my Lord and Saviour, was the Holy One of God. They tell us that He had a nature, in union with His Godhead, fallen, corrupt, and sinful, as is ours. Now I say that if the searching eye of the Omniscient could discover but one line or trace of corruption in His nature or person,—which God forbid,—then was He no longer the Lamb without spot or blemish ; then is the atonement over-

thrown, and we are yet in our sins. And, indeed, it would seem as if there was some suspicion of this kind among them; as well from the slighting way in which they have spoken of the substitution of the Saviour in the sinner's stead, as also of the mode of the sinner's justification; making it rather to result from the work of the Holy Spirit in the flesh, than from the one offering once for all, by which a way is opened into the holiest, into God's own presence, by the blood of Jesus. This work of our blessed Lord, is what satisfieth God; and this work, apprehended by faith, is what satisfieth the sinner, and enableth him to go in peace; and to put any work done in the flesh in the place of this, is, indeed, to build on a sandy foundation. What is flesh? That thing in which dwelleth nothing good — the old nature that is enmity against God. It is just the devil's place in us; and it is just ready for any thing he has to do for it; and to expect any change in it, is only to deceive ourselves. We may indeed, and we should, have victory over it in the power of the Spirit; but victory, and not change, is what we are directed to look for. Thus do they dishonour the person of our blessed Lord, attributing unto Him sinful flesh like ours; and in Him do they dishonour the Father, making the body, which in His purpose of old He prepared for His Beloved (Heb. x. 5), a body of sin. And, further, do they dishonour unto God the Holy Ghost, whose begetting they make all one as that of sinful man; asserting that the body which He did form out of the substance of the Virgin, to be a tabernacle meet for the indwelling of the Son of God, was, in its nature, unclean, even as others.

Then why the *begetting* of the Holy Spirit? Would not His *regenerating* power meet their view of our Lord's nature; and how, according to their shewing, did He differ from Jeremiah and John the Baptist, who were sanctified from the womb? I do, from my heart, rejoice in the true and very humanity of our blessed Lord; that while He was true and very God, yet was He man also, even as I am man. The one who laid hold on both natures, and united them never more to be separated. But I also rejoice that the corruption, the incurable taint (Jer. xvii. 9) which I know to be in me, He had none of. If He was not truly man, then could there have been no atonement for man; for man sinned, and man must satisfy or suffer. But if He had any of the pollution which is in the fallen nature of man, neither then could there have been atonement; He would not have been a fitting offering to present unto God on the behalf of others. If not true and very God, in opposition to all Arian and Socinian blasphemy, He could not stand forth as the independent and self-existing; who had, out of His own Divine fullness, to give unto the need of another. If not pure and spotless in the nature which He took into union with His own—wondrous mystery of love!—He could not stand forth a sufficient sacrifice, a spotless victim, to meet the gaze of Him who is “of purer eyes than to behold evil.” If there was but one trace, one solitary speck, of aught that is corrupt or unclean in the nature of our blessed Lord, then never could it be said of Him by the Father, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased,”—well-pleased with that which is in itself corrupt and sinful! But it may be said that He is so with

us, and still we have the sinful nature. True, and blessedly true. He is well-pleased with us, but it is "*accepted in the beloved*, in whom we have redemption through his blood:" and the most perfect holiness wrought out of the Spirit in man, only goes up well-pleasing to the Father, as it goeth up through that beloved One, holy and blessed for ever. This grievous error, in a measure at least, results from not seeing that sinfulness is no *necessary* ingredient, no *essential* property, so to speak, of man's nature. It is the state or condition into which it is fallen; but as there has been, so will there again be, the nature without the defilement, and as truly and really man's nature as it is now in the defilement. And thus can I see the humiliation of our blessed Lord in stooping down to oneness with our very nature, while He is rescued from the charge of association with the filth and foulness of it.

Again, I protest against their treatment of the word, God's blessed word, which opens His will and mind to us. They put their own revelations on a level with it, to which they equally, indeed more than equally, demand obedience; and God's children they would deprive of their strength and comfort in denying to them the power to understand their Father's word, or hold communion with Him in it by the Holy Spirit which is given them. Their common teaching is similar to that of the Church of Rome. "You must hear the church, and give up searching the Scriptures for yourself: it is by ordinances that God now instructs His people; you must be obedient unto ordinances: it is by living men, and not by a dead letter;

is not a man better than a book?" And this is the only satisfaction, as I have reason to know, that one can obtain who has been offended by the false teaching or unholy living of their *spiritual* ministry. Here, I say, is most dishonouring treatment of the word, which is the Spirit's teaching to the saints, His testimony unto Jesus (John xv. 26, v. 39), His telling to the betrothed of the grace and beauty of her Beloved. But I find that their testimony is not unto Jesus, but unto the church. Of Him I am not told any thing additional by their spirit, but what is to His dishonour. Their testimony is rather unto her than unto Him. The church and her ordinances, her Jewish appendages, which are in fact exalted above Christ; and the belief in which, and not in Christ, is made the test of orthodoxy. Of old the testimony was, "a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, *and Him shall ye hear* in all things." But now it is, "the church, the ordained ministers; hear them: none other now must speak." Of old it was, "I believe, and therefore have I spoken:" but now it is, "I believe, and therefore must I be silent." Let a disciple have his heart full to bursting with the love of God, and let him long to tell unto others of that love, if so be he may win them from their evil ways. No; he must not. The Church hath ordained. It is the work of the evangelist; and he has only in sorrowful heart, from his misplaced obedience, to smother the outgoings of his love, till it wither and waste away. To argue with this is but to waste words. It is not argument, it is true-heartedness for the Lord, it is child-like subjection to His word that is wanting;

and strange it is, and very sorrowful, that in this—even if it were this alone—they cannot discern what spirit is among them.

Again, I find their dishonour to the word in their palpable opposition to various parts of it. In treating of the gifts in the church, in 1 Cor. xiv., I find (ver. 28) the exercise of “the tongue,” the unknown tongue, as it is called, expressly forbidden when there is no interpreter. How repeatedly have they spoken in what they profess to be “the tongues,”* and to this appealed as a proof of the Spirit among them, while still they are forced to acknowledge that they never had an interpreter. Is not this trampling under foot the word? Again, there is not, in the New Testament, a plainer command than that in ver. 34 of the same chapter, “let your women keep silence *in the church*, for it is not

* On the subject of the “tongues” I subjoin an argument, and I do not readily see how it may be answered, from a late publication of Lord Mandeville’s, “Things Hoped For;” a little work containing much interesting, rather novel, interpretation of Scripture.

“If I mistake not, the cessation of the gift of languages is intimated in 1 Cor. xiii. 8—10: ‘Love never faileth; but whether (there be) prophecies, they shall be *abolished* (*καταργηθισονται*); whether languages, they shall *cease* (*παυσονται*); whether knowledge, it shall be *abolished* (*καταργηθησεται*): for partially we know, and partially we prophesy; but when the perfect (state) shall have come, the partial shall be abolished.’ Now, here it is predicated concerning two out of the three gifts, that they shall be abolished, and when? at the introduction of the perfect state. Those gifts of the Spirit will therefore continue throughout all this dispensation: but respecting the other gift, namely, that of languages, we are not told that it shall be abolished by the introduction of the perfect state, but that it ‘shall cease;’ and upon its cessation, we have no authority for its revival. The proper question, then, simply is, Did the gift of languages ever cease in the church? and this all must admit.”

permitted them to speak. Whatever be the proper sphere of a woman's labours and service for the Lord, wherever she may legitimately exercise her gift (and so exercised most blessed I do believe it is), but assuredly it is not in the church; for there, *σιγαρῶσαν*, let them keep silence, is the plain order of the Spirit. But this we know again is systematically trampled on, and that under the pretence of the Spirit speaking; thus making Him to contradict His own word. They will not suffer women to exercise their gift when it is in strict accordance with the word, and therefore unto God's glory. They will not allow of their labouring with them in the gospel, when in their place their labour is blessed indeed; but they will allow and encourage them to speak in the church, when God's word expressly forbids it. Instead of adhering to the Scriptures as the word of God, instead of a holy jealousy and watchfulness that our souls bow down and tremble before the oracles of God, I know nothing more characteristic of this delusion than the way in which the word is slighted, and their own pretensions substituted for it. By their interpretations, with the assumption of infallibility, God's precious word is just made to say anything, or nothing, as they please; and we who desire to honour it, and to walk in obedience thereto, even at the risk of all, what is our treatment at their hands? Why, "we are idolaters of the word." Yes, this is common phraseology with them. Well, if it be idolatry to love it as the expression of God's love to us; if it be idolatry to search it as where we may discover His mind, and see the character of all delusion; if it be idolatry to obey it

with simple childlike obedience; to make it the lamp to our feet, and the light to our path; to receive from it, under the teaching of the Spirit, our joy, and peace, and hope, our wisdom and our power; to know it as the testimony to Jesus, and to feed on it "that we may grow thereby;" if this be idolatry, I only pray that there may be more idolaters amongst us, and more thorough in their idolatry.

I confess that it has been to me a source of much satisfaction and thankfulness, as opening the secret of this delusion, that of those whom I have known receive it, I do not remember one, who (however holy he may have been) I did not find previously falling into some error regarding the word; either denying its efficacy or its sufficiency, or the right of God's children to search it, or their power to understand it, or denying to them the possession of the Holy Spirit, by whom alone they can understand it, or can call God their Father. But so surely as we have Christ, so surely we have His Spirit; and if we have not, then is there neither church nor saint. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." He, then, who will deny unto believers the Spirit, denies unto the Lord His people, and unto His people their Lord. For it is in Him that we have and hold the promise; unto Him it was fulfilled (Acts ii. 33) indeed every promise (2 Cor. i. 20), and not unto us apart from Him. And just here is its security and permanency. However failure may and will characterize every thing of man, there is none with Him. And therefore I say, that the Spirit given unto Christ, and from Christ to His church, is as truly with

His church now, even as of old, in right of its union with Him to whom the promise was fulfilled, and to whom it is sure. I acknowledge that He does not manifest Himself in gift now as of old, and that His energy is hindered by the divisions and disobedience of believers. He is grieved by their waywardness and wilfulness.

It is thus only that I can account for the fact, that many of God's dear children, as I believe, are held captive by this delusion. They deprive themselves virtually of the lamp, and necessarily fall into darkness. They hold to an error that perpetuates itself; and here is the subtilty of Satan. I have at times felt astonished (who has not?) at the insensibility of those whom I know to be dear children of God to the delusion in which they are entangled, and that, under the manifest and manifold proofs of delusion which have been plainly set before them; for, as one remarks, certainly as competent as any other to deal with the question from intimate knowledge of all its mystery and working, "it has now gone through the course of prediction, and non-fulfilment; expectation and disappointment; doctrinal views advanced, and abandoned, works of discipline adopted and cast aside, and forms of government gradually assuming apostolic powers, without any sign of an apostle being manifested." (*Baxter's Letter to Armstrong.*) The first promise or prophecy of the renewal of the Apostolate*, was, that it should be in signs and

* Would it not appear that Peter did not foresee any future apostolate after those of our Lord's appointment, from the care he manifests in his epistle, that the church should have these things

wonders and gifts of the Holy Ghost ; and until these were manifested, no one could be recognized as an apostle ; nor without these would the church be warranted in allowing its ordinances to be interfered with. Well, the signs never appeared ; but yet the apostles are called, and the church has been modelled, and remodelled. The apostles laid claim I believe to one sign, “patience.” A very ambiguous one it may be said ; but even of this they have now deprived themselves ; going about with apostolic pretension, but without one particle of apostolic power, or one sign to which the apostle of the Gentiles could refer, when challenged as to his authority. Truly its folly is manifest (would I could say !) to all. Oh that any of God’s dear children should suffer themselves so to be deluded ! but as one told me who had himself been deep in the mystery, when expressing to him my surprise at the insensibility exhibited to such obvious and unquestionable evidence of delusion ;—he told me, that he really had no capability of perceiving or appreciating truth, when it clashed with the system — every thing must be wrong, no matter how simple, how plain, or palpable it was, if it did not bow down in subjection to the church ! —Their church ! What they miscall the church must be paramount everywhere, and to everything, It is not “to the law and to the testimony,” no ; but “what saith the church ?” “The testimony” may say as it will, it matters not. There is no conscience ; no truth ; no feeling ; no

in remembrance after his decease, 2nd Epistle, i. 12—15. One would think, that he need not be so urgent, if others were to arise endued with like power ; and this doubt would receive increased force, if we can think that he foresaw a succession of apostles after him.

sense of duty apart from the dictum of the church. Unto this assumption must the word of God bow down, and take the meaning, not that God hath given to it, but that the church may please to impose on it; and hence the thorough worldliness of the system. "Be not conformed to this world," is the utterance of the Spirit in the word; but this is not the good pleasure of the church. It is an unpalatable doctrine; and therefore is the precept as though it were not, and very worldliness is a character of the system. Again, the assumption of the church meets us in the high-sounding pretensions, and loud denunciations, assumed by her ministers to those whom they may affect. The solemn challenge to hear them as the commissioned servants of God, to beware how they reject them at their souls' peril; thus working upon their fears and weakness. Is this our Lord's way?

Of the true church, "the congregation of *faithful* men in which the *pure* word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered," — of this church will I say, which abides by God's word and ordinances, I do desire to honour her as honoured of God; and further I desire to be in subjection unto her. I believe that God's love rests on her, I believe that Christ hath purchased her with His own blood; and I do believe that the headiness and self-dependence and assumption of many are evil in the extreme; the works of the flesh which should unsparingly be denounced. But willingly allowing all this, and coveting, God knoweth, subjection in myself and my brethren, not to the letter merely, but in spirit; still do I say, that if all the communions on earth, called churches, were to rise up and claim my

obedience in opposition to the plain word of my Lord, then though I stand alone, yet, God helping me, will I stand alone, in holy obedience to my Lord, and not unto that which has nothing, and is nothing, but as she hath from Him, and is in Him. If we will hear the church rather than the church's Lord; if we will obey the church, when she is disobedient to the word of God, then I can see no limit to the apostasy which may flow in—the flood-gate is opened, and the only barrier against the tide of evil is removed—the directory of the saints is slighted; and when it is so, apostasy must be in a greater or less degree the character of the community so treating it.

Then there is its power of adaptation. Not the blessed power of God by which He meeteth His people with the grace suited to their need out of His riches in Christ Jesus: no; but the power by which it artfully accommodates itself to the scruples of those with whom it has to deal; and has for each one its word as they may bear it. So unlike the way of our blessed Lord. So unlike the straightforwardness, the single-eyed simplicity and sincerity of the gospel. At one time, one statement is made; at another time a different one; and the peculiarities of the system kept in the back-ground, when those are known to be present whom they may wish to conciliate and not wish to offend. Now I understand that they deny their holding the nature of our Lord to be corrupt like ours. I know that they do so to some who cannot receive it; yet one of the principal officers at Newman Street, told me, that if I did not see this, I could see nothing. And another, that though they had done nothing else, it was a good work to rescue this

doctrine from the error in which it had lain. And on the occasion of the difference between Mr. Irving and Mr. Baxter on this doctrine, their Spirit at Newman Street declared that the former was right, and Mr. Baxter wrong, who denied the sinful nature to our Lord. Thus do they say and unsay as it suits them; and I know nothing that more stamps the system than this double face, which it wears as occasion requires. This will of course be all denied, for it is their way to deny everything said against them, but I write only what I have myself witnessed again and again, or, as to doctrine, what any one may learn from the works of their accredited teachers. Many of them I doubt not began in sincerity; but they began in error; and it is the character of error to propagate itself, and when the error was detected and shewn to them, they still fondly clung to it. It was their own child, and they would not forsake it. They began in false doctrine, and false too on a vital point; attributing to our blessed Lord a sinful nature like ours, which was only upheld from *actual* sin by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in power; and their conclusion was, that if we had the Holy Ghost as He had, and which they asserted to be our privilege, then might we be holy as He was. Indeed some of them laid claim to this sinlessness by the mighty power of the Spirit which they said they had gotten: and others went so far as to say, that this was but a little thing, and that not only conformity to Jesus, but a holiness above His was our portion, as entitled to that which He had not—the resurrection Spirit.

Error is a prolific thing. Their conclusion set them to

look for the Spirit which was so to work in them, and many, I believe, did very earnestly pray and wrestle for the Spirit as *for what they had not*. They encouraged themselves in the assurance that their Father would not give a stone when a child asked him for bread, that he would give His Holy Spirit to them that asked Him. They did not see that this precious promise is fulfilled to us in Christ ; that to Him He has given the Spirit ; and that from Him, our risen Head, the supply cometh down to His members ; and that our work now is, not to lie waiting and inactive ; but in the energy of faith to arise and go forward, in the assurance that in Christ we have all that is wanting for our provision by the way ; all that we want, to meet every requirement of our Father's will. Let us only abide in Him. Let this be our object, and we shall know His abiding in us in the power of His Holy Spirit, preserving us from every delusion ; leading us into victory over every enemy ; leading us up into the blessedness of our heavenly calling. When this fails us, then are we warranted, but not till then, to look for something more. But this would not suffice them, they looked for the Spirit, as of old, in His gifts and manifestation, as set forth in 1 Cor. xii.—They seemed unwilling to allow of the sovereignty of the Spirit to deal with the church according to His own will, at different seasons and under different circumstances ; and thus, while they were slighting what they had of God, instead of proving the power in their souls, and while they were anxiously looking and waiting and expecting what they had no warrant to expect—thus exposing themselves to, and inviting, as it were, the enemy—he does come in with

some strange thing, for I do believe that his very power was there, and that it is not else to be accounted for. He does come in with the roar of a lion ; with a tongue without a meaning ; with dishonour to the person of Christ ; with the assurance that the word in their lips was all one, equal in authority with that which the holy men of old did speak as they were moved by the Holy Ghost—the scripture given by inspiration of God—with a string of prophecies which have uniformly failed as the time of their predicted fulfilment has come round, (at least as they were made known to us, for of late their proceedings I understand have been with closed doors), and with a set of interpretations of the Scripture, which might just as well be drawn from the Koran as from the Bible. This is what they have presented us with, as the fruit of the Spirit in power come down upon them. But as to any true power which may be witnessed by others, in leading them into fellowship with Christ Jesus our Lord, “in the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings ;” as to anything of His stranger and pilgrim character here ; as to any increased conformity with the mind of our blessed Master in His humility and holiness, His meekness and love—then in truth we see it not ; and if their new and boasted power have given it to them, they have been skilful indeed to hide it. Any holiness I have seen, has been but the savour of what they had of old ; a light, sadly dimmed, and waning fast away in those whom I have known of them. Ah, what worldliness, and what chilling coldness and insensibility to the Lord’s glory, in many of those whose hearts once did seem to burn within them as they spake of Jesus ! In truth, very worldliness

seems their characteristic,—dogmatism and superciliousness, with weakness and formality.

Such is Irvingism now, at least as I have seen it. We may hope that some have preserved their integrity in the system, not seeing its evil. Multitudes failed to see it for a time; indeed it was not at once manifested as it now is; and many there were, grieving over the low and divided state of the church, and who earnestly longed for something better, when it arose and stood forth commended by all the talent and attractiveness of Edward Irving, the powers of mind and nobleness of heart of that extraordinary man, who I do believe prematurely fell a sacrifice to this the offspring of his own ardent and unsubdued imagination. Well, he rests in Jesus for ever free from the delusion now, and a warning to others, how little mighty talent and mighty eloquence can avail without subduedness of soul unto the mind of Christ. Where is the man who held multitudes suspended on his lips as he did, and where is the man who, as he, led multitudes astray—falling into the snare of Satan? His great gifts were worse than useless. The Lord keep us; we are weak when the enemy cometh in, but let us stand in faith and here is our strength (2 Cor. xii. 9).

But here I say was the snare. Many there were dissatisfied, and not without reason, with everything they saw. The worldliness of the ecclesiastical establishment of the land, and the erroneousness of some of her principles which were as imperative as her truth. Then the political bearing of the great body of the dissenters, and their sad union, for political ends, with the deniers of the Lord Jesus; and besides in doctrine, their rejection of

the coming of the Lord as the hope of the church, and of liberty to the Spirit as the minister in the Church. Under these circumstances when Irvingism arose, many were led captive by it. They believed what they wished to be true. They expected to find a rest for their souls, in which many have been grievously disappointed I do believe, at least the true-hearted among them. Others dissatisfied, and for the same reasons, knew not what to think of this new thing, but awaited the Lord's mind concerning it. I confess so it was with myself, I was thoroughly dissatisfied and disheartened with all I saw. I longed for something more according to the mind of God in the Scriptures ; and I thought Irvingism might be it. I went to the head quarters, and diligently examined into it, some years past, before it stood out in its present unambiguous character. I knew not what to think of it. Some things I saw wrong, and I told them so ; but I could not decide on its character at the time. I felt, however, assured, that the Lord would graciously manifest its true character to His people whom He knew were only desirous to know His will, and for grace to do it. I think few can have doubt about it now, who in honesty will thus judge of it, "by their fruits ye shall know them." These bitter fruits, or a few leaves from that unhealthy plant, I have here presented. I did not think so long to dwell upon the subject. My desire was simply to rescue myself from the imputation by my protest against it ; but I have been led on ; and let what I have written go forth as a warning to those whom it may meet, against error dangerous, I believe, exceedingly.

I have been led on to so much greater length than

I intended, that I shall refer but to another subject, and that—the charge of novelty so frequently brought against us. I observed some time since in the *Christian Examiner* (1834, p. 233) the following high character of an ecclesiastical historian of the present day. It is in an article from an American publication, and written by an American professor, “able and trustworthy,” as he is described. Speaking of Berlin, he says, “Neander the first ecclesiastical historian of the age, and perhaps the best exegetical lecturer on the New Testament, is the ornament of this University.” This would naturally make one desirous to see Neander’s book; and since the publication of my pamphlet I procured it, at least the first volume,* translated by a churchman of high character, prefaced and noted of course, and rightly so with his views, to protect himself from the appearance of sanctioning what he esteems error, yet with the highest testimony to Neander. “The more intimately,” says Mr. Rose, “I acquaint myself with his work, the more I am convinced of the high qualities both of head and heart which adorn its author. His work is distinguished in general by his candour and acuteness, his diligence and fidelity; qualities of which I have some right to speak, from having verified almost all his quotations; and I have found him uniformly entitled to this praise.” This is high testimony to Neander, but how does his history bear upon the question? why thus: I might very nearly, indeed I believe entirely, refer to

* If Mr. Rose has relinquished the intention of bringing out the 2nd volume of Neander, (the 1st was published in 1831), it would be well if some one with the leisure and ability would present a translation of it to the English reader.

Neander's statement of the constitution of the primitive church for a correct view of our principles on the subject. I observe that it is simply as touching the constitution of the church that I quote Neander ; and this, as a testimony to those who may give heed to such testimony, and not desiring for ourselves to build anything on it. This I say not to his disparagement, of whom I know nothing contrary to the high character above given ; but simply as one desiring to rest my faith both as regards my own soul, and the constitution and standing of the church, on the word of God.

“ A class of priests,” Neander tells us, “ who were to guide all other men under an assumption of their incompetence in religious matters ; whose business it was exclusively to provide for the satisfaction of the religious wants of the rest of mankind, and to form a link between them and God and godly things ; such a class of priests could find no place in Christianity. While the gospel put away that which separated man from God, by bringing all men (all believers) into the same communion with God through Christ ; it also removed that partition-wall which separated one man from his fellows in regard to his more elevated interests. The same High Priest, and Mediator for all, by whom all being reconciled and united with God, become themselves a priestly and spiritual race ! One heavenly King, Guide and Teacher, through whom all are taught from God ! One faith, one hope, one Spirit, which must animate all ; one oracle in the hearts of all, the voice of the Spirit which proceeds from God ; and all citizens of one heavenly kingdom, with whose heavenly powers they have already

been sent forth as strangers in the world. When the apostles introduced the notion of a priest which is found in the Old Testament into Christianity, it was always only with the intention of shewing, that no such visible and distinct priesthood, as existed in the economy of the Old Testament, could find admittance into that of the New; that, inasmuch as free access to God and to heaven was once for all opened to the faithful by the one high priest, Christ, they had become, by union with Him, a holy and spiritual people, and their calling was only this; namely, to consecrate their whole life, as a sacrifice of thanksgiving for the mercy of God's redemption; and to preach the power and grace of Him, who had called them from the kingdom of darkness into His wonderful light; and their whole life was to be a continued priesthood, a spiritual serving of God, proceeding from the affections of a faith working by love, and also a continued witness of their Redeemer. Compare 1 Pet. ii. 9. Rom. xii. 1., and the spirit and connexion of ideas throughout the whole epistle to the Hebrews. And thus also the furtherance of God's kingdom, both in general, and in each individual community, the furtherance of the propagation of Christianity among the heathen, and the improvement of each particular church, was not to be the concern of a particular chosen class of Christians; but the nearest duty of every individual Christian. Every one was to contribute to this object from the station assigned to him by the invisible head of the church, and by the gifts peculiar to him, which were given by God, and grounded in his nature: a nature, which retained indeed its individual character; but was regenerated and ennobled by the influence of the Holy Spirit. There was

here no division into spiritual and worldly; but all as Christians, in their inward life and dispositions, were to be men dead to the ungodliness of the world, and thus far departed out of the world; men animated by the Spirit of God, and not by the spirit of the world."

"The condition of the Corinthian Church, as it is depicted in the epistles of St. Paul, deficient as it was in many respects, shews us how a Christian Church should act; how all in that Church should mutually co-operate with their mutual gifts as members of the same body, with equal honour supplying one another's deficiencies. The office of a teacher was not here exclusively assigned to one or to more; but every one who felt a call to that office might address a discourse to the assembly of the Church for the instruction of all." p. 180-183.

So far Neander's testimony as to liberty of ministry, and as to the non-existence of any privileged order of men in the primitive church distinct from the people, a clergy and laity, which he represents as "wholly unevangelical, for all Christians ought in this sense to be a body of men consecrated to God, a *κληρος του Θεου*, and all their earthly callings ought to be sanctified by the Spirit in which they pursue them.—Such was the original gospel notion." p. 198. "The more a Christian Church answered its proper destination, and corresponded to its true model, the more must it be shewn in the mutual relations of all its members; that all, taught, led, and filled by the one, all drawing from the same fountain, and mutually imparting, as equal members of the one body, stand in reciprocal relation to each other." p. 196.

On the subject of government, he tells us that, "a council of elders was generally appointed to conduct the

affairs of the Church," p. 187,—“ that these presbyters or bishops had the superintendence over the whole Church; the conduct of all its common affairs; but the office of teacher was not exclusively assigned to them; for, as we have above observed, all Christians had the right to pour out their hearts before their brethren in the assemblies of the Church, and to speak for their edification.” p. 188. “ It was, however,” he observes, “ a source of great satisfaction, when, among the rulers of the Church, there were men qualified also for teachers.” p. 190. “ The only other Church office,” he observes, “ in the apostolic age, was that of deacon.” p. 191.

If it be said, as respects these offices, that we differ from the statement of Neander respecting the primitive church, I reply, that we do not differ, though we acknowledge we do not attain to it; simply because we do not just see how legitimately we can, coming out of apostasy and confessedly in weakness, which is just the result of the apostasy. We do not pretend to have got back into the power of the Apostolic Church, but this we do not make an excuse for continuing in evil which we may escape—for countenancing anything that we see contrary to God's mind as revealed in His word. We are in a position, though of weakness, yet where we have judged evil, and desire to judge it as we discover it, and moreover to act in obedience as we may, to every word of God; therefore do we meet with all who profess* to have found peace through the blood of the cross, “ whose sins are forgiven for His name's sake;” yea, with the weakest to whom He is precious.

* Doubtless we may often err, for hypocrites may come in and deceive us, but this has nothing to say to the question, our principle on which we act is still the same.

We meet for the communion of the body and blood of Christ, for prayer, and for the exercise of any gift which those, who are made partakers of the One Spirit, may have of that Spirit wherewith to edify the Church. We meet, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is," but exhorting *one another*, and in the assurance of that promise, that, "where two or three are gathered together in His name, there is He in the midst of them." Here, amidst all our weakness we are in a scriptural position, in one of obedience, and accordingly in one of present blessing, as we often prove to His praise, and where we are warranted to look for increasing blessing from our God, if we be only faithful—our bond of union is this, partakers of the same Spirit, or rather partakers of Christ by the Spirit, His word the lamp unto our feet—all such we know, however they may differ from us in other things—we do not make unity of sentiment our bond of union: No; we acknowledge that in many things we differ, and herein is weakness; but herein we have learned of our God to exercise forbearance (Rom. xiv), and to prove more the power of His love to unite us in Christ, than the power of mere difference of opinion in other things, to separate us. Is this the position of the Established Church? No—we see the veriest worldliness in every aspect, and her saints not judging, but justifying it! we see the very highest pretensions, coupled with the very extremest weakness—we hear of uniformity, while probably there is not a shade of error which may not be found within her pale: we hear of Apostolic Succession—so do we at Rome*—but those who

* At Rome, it has been said, the Church rules the State, but here we have a worse thing, the State rules the Church.

affect it, we see nothing the better of it, and believe that it only leads into that anomalous thing which Neander calls "a Judæo-Christian Priesthood." Office, indeed, in the primitive Church we see, and most desirable we acknowledge that it is, when from God—but who is there to appoint to office *now*, who to confer authority? This is what as yet we have not been able to find, and without this, office is simply unfounded pretension.

Do we then reject *ministry*? God forbid, we prize and honour it as of God—we feel our responsibility, to acknowledge every gift as we see it of God; whether it be of rule or pastorship, of teaching or evangelizing; and equally to reject every pretension, however it may come, ordained or unordained, which does not bring with it this credential from on high. We would, indeed, and the Lord knoweth that we ask it of Him, that every little meeting of believers in the land had those whom the Holy Ghost hath made bishops or overseers to "take heed" to them and feed them; and that evangelists to tell of God's love to perishing sinners were risen up and multiplied a hundred fold. It is with us an easy and a happy thing to acknowledge God's gifts in His servants. All we would plead for in reference to this, is that which we find in the New Testament, and which Neander describes as the practice of the primitive church; the liberty of the Spirit in ministry; that each may edify his brethren according to the gift which God hath given him for edification; as we find in the epistle to the Corinthians; to the Romans, xii; in the epistle of Peter, iv. 10, 11; and, indeed, I think, all through the New Testament. If it be said,

as often it is, that this was a time when the miraculous power of the Spirit was in the church, I say, even so; this does not prejudice the question. The miraculous gifts or power of the Spirit do not seem specially necessary for edification in ministry. It is the presence of the Spirit Himself, acknowledged and unhindered in the members, which works to edification. He Himself is better to us than His most excellent gift: and very remarkable it is, that the Church which seems to have been richest in "gifts," also seems to have been the most corrupt and disorderly; and in the two last quoted passages, that of Paul to the Romans, and of Peter, I believe I might say, in their epistles, we have nothing of miraculous gift.*

* I am aware that shortly after the apostolic age, ministry was very much limited to office. But I am also aware of other errors besides this having very early crept into the Church; therefore the greater the necessity to cleave unto the word alone. Of this the apostle warns us, Acts xx. 29, 30. He tells us of the evil, the wolves without, those speaking perverse things within, in v. 31, 32. he gives us the remedy, "therefore watch," "I commend you to God, and to *the word of His grace*, which is able to build you up," &c. In the 2nd epistle to the Thessalonians he tells us that, "the mystery of iniquity was *even then* working;" and those who were preserved from it,—how was it? "through sanctification of the Spirit, and *belief of the truth*;" and in the 2nd epistle to Timothy, 3rd chapter, when dwelling on the evil of the last days, what does he give us as the means of prevention, "continue thou in the things which thou hast learned—the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation," &c. In the 1st epistle of John c. iv. in directing us in the trial of the spirits, he tells us v. 3, that the spirit of antichrist was *already* in the world, in v. 6, he gives the mark and preservative of God's people, "he that knoweth God, heareth us." We shall cease to wonder when we consider these testimonies that error is so venerable in years, and we should further learn the exceeding value of the word—in everything to rest on this only foundation,—*"It is written."* Therefore what I contend for is, *the practice of the Apostolic Church as recorded in the New Testament*; and

If, further, it be said, as also it often is, that this is giving liberty to any one who may think himself fit to rise up and assume the place of teacher, then I reply most distinctly that it is not so; for it is not merely *as a man thinks of himself*, but as he approves himself as one qualified by the Spirit of God, in grace, in utterance, in knowledge, that he is received. And the Church is just under the same responsibility to reject what is *not* of the Lord, as she is to receive what so proves itself.

It may be said, that the order and constitution of the Established Church, and, indeed, of other churches, would not allow of this liberty. I know it. But what does this prove? Surely not that the liberty of the Spirit is wrong;—no; but that your order and constitution which is opposed to it, is wrong. Oh let us acknowledge the supremacy of the Spirit *in the Church*! He is the Great

that this is in favour of liberty of ministry we have seen Neander's testimony. I think that there are admissions in Mosheim to the same effect; and Dr. Bloomfield acknowledges on Pet. iv. 10, that "at that early period the distinction between clergy and laity was not fully established," and on Acts xiv, 23, his testimony is strongly to the same effect. There is also in Neander, p. 185, a quotation from Hilary bearing on the subject, which I commend to those who prize such testimony. "Primum omnes docebant, et omnes baptizabant; ut cresceret plebs et multiplicantur, omnibus inter initia concessum est, et evangelizare, et baptizare, et Scripturas explorare." All this is plain enough, and such quotations might easily be multiplied, but they little matter, *what saith the word?* To this I bow, but beyond this I know of no authority, which it does not sanction; and it is well for me, for otherwise I should be quite overwhelmed. One of my opponents brings his authorities down on me all the way from Momulus of Girba, to the high priest of Oro!!! This is very astounding to a plain person like myself; but happily for me, my principle preserves me from its force; I am satisfied with the testimony of "the early period." My Bible, and therefore my authority, ends with the book of Revelations.

Minister ; and we can only have effective ministry, or true order, as we forsake the traditions of man, and yield obedience to His holy word.

With these additional observations, I commend my little work to the care of the Great Head of the church ; and, in brotherly love, to the candid consideration of God's dear children.

OBEDIENCE.

I HAVE found that one of the points on which the condition of the Church of God hangs very much at the present time, is, whether obedience precedes blessing, or blessing obedience. Many are, in some degree, though perhaps, by no means altogether, aware of the extent to which the principle, that blessing must precede obedience where the will of God is ascertained, has gone, or how widely its influence is spreading. It is a strange point of connection between Newman Street and the subsisting systems. The directions (as far as they are apprehended in the minds of those concerned, which is the only way in which we are concerned in them) which have emanated from Mr. IRVING, or those speaking with him, have certainly varied; but they have all borne directly upon retaining those subject to them in the systems current as religion in the world (though these are all asserted by them to be Babylon), and upon the plea that they could take no step until they received the Spirit, such as they possessed in Newman Street. This has frequently been the result of direct instructions in that place to persons who have gone there.

Another principle has been adopted by a large body of the religious clergy in Ireland, tending to the same point:—that without tradition no step can be taken, because obedience becomes uncertain, and therefore dangerous. The result is wonderfully similar, and seems to me to proceed from Satan—such uncertainty and difficulty of mind as leads a person to settle down in what is confessedly wrong, and what he knows to be such. This, inevitably dulling the conscience, leads to a state of mind grievous to the Spirit of God, and neces-

sarily lowering the moral energy of the parties concerned ; “for to him that hath more shall be given.” The coalition between Irvingism and High Church principles in this respect, has an astonishingly wide influence ; and often so, when the persons concerned little suspect the source from which it flows ; while it finds ample aliment in the natural feeling of timidity and unbelief, and assumes the justifiable principle of caution, and is never thought for a moment to be the result of man’s disposition to acquiesce in evil, rather than to act in trying circumstances.

In those who decline acting from the want of the power of the Spirit, it assumes the form of greater humility than usual, and great dependance upon the Holy Ghost. On the other side, it appears like great steadiness of character, and an indisposition to acquiesce in the movements unguided by principle, which the easily led human mind is in so many ways making at the present moment. Thus, certainly, the fairest principles of conduct are brought to bear (though from such opposite, and, but for this, mutually opposed sides) upon those who conscientiously do not acquiesce in the evil in which they find themselves placed. Nothing can be more opposed than the principles which lead to the conclusion on one side and on the other. In result only they agree—to stay where circumstances have placed them ; which is just what the selfishness of unbelief will always do.

Now there is one thing only which can justly withstand the power over the mind of such nominally good views as these, so apparently opposed to evil—and that is *obedience*. There is nothing so humble, nothing so steady as obedience ; nothing which so marks the Spirit’s presence, nothing so opposed to insubordination, nothing by which every ungodly voice must be so utterly silenced, as by obedience. I confess, when I see such very opposite principles leading to the same conclusion—principles so diametrically opposite, and in conflict with each other, as resting on the presence of the Spirit and tradition,—I am led to think that the result is not the effect of the principles in either case, but of some entirely different motive ; and that the only operation of the principles is

to neutralise, in either case, some other principle which would act in moving those who plead them ; and consequently, by so neutralising it, to leave them where they were, without respect to the right or wrong of the case ; which is precisely the result in the present instance. And such, I believe, to be just the fact ; but if God have any will in the matter, and this consequently terminates in *disobedience*, it becomes a very positive evil, most grievous to the Spirit of God, supposed to be, or waited for, and makes tradition (discoverable or undiscoverable) to be such as renders void the word of God. It is reserved for these days, among Protestants, to make tradition a necessary supplement to the word of God ; and it is a very great mistake to suppose that it was ever used in the early Churches in the way now proposed. It was there, whether wisely or unwisely, a positive tradition, and in confirmation of doctrines avowedly taught and declared.—A tradition that they had not yet (or did not know to be the security of the Church) was an imbecility reserved surely for a state of hopeless decay. But the assertion, that obedience is the great principle to go on, obedience to known truth, not plans of our own mind, but obedience to known truth as the portion of a single-eyed, humble, simple mind—and that this is the way of these additional blessings, which are matters of God's gift—obedience to the order of which is then the part (of course) of every spiritual mind, is of very great importance : but, in all cases and under all circumstances, gifts or no gifts, obedience is the path of a Christian—the path of duty and blessing.

I would first shew the essentiality of the principle, its deep essentiality ; then, that it is the preliminary of blessing ; and lastly, that it is the order of all special gift in Christ, the *ἐφ' ᾧ* on which it all flows forth. The first establishes the principle ; the last applies it. Obedience is the only rightful state of the creature, or God would cease to be supreme—would cease to be God. God may show the impotency of the creature, by turning all the wilful rebellions it may be guilty of to His own purpose in blessing, and they that are *adversaries* bound to it in His own power ; but the only rightful position

of the creature is obedience; upon this hangs all the order of the creation—on this hangs sin and righteousness. The definition of sin is lawlessness, doing one's own will. "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Let us see how distinctly this is brought out in Scripture in its broadest lines. The first Adam, and the second, the Lord from heaven, the great heads and types of ruin and blessing, are thus distinguished as the disobedient and the obedient ones:—"By one man's disobedience many were made sinners: by the obedience of One many were made righteous." The first Adam did his own will, and he perished by it. He was put under a test of obedience. This was the critical point of the first Adam's standing and blessing;—"Thou shalt not eat:"—he did eat, and was ruined: death, the wages of sin, came in, the consequence of man's act, that not being the will of God: death was the wages of sin; and sin was disobedience—insubjection to God. Here its character and result was determined,—the hinge of man's fate,—the now wide open door to every evil: but at which indeed mercy entered before man was excluded, that he might bear it with him in the desert, into which he was driven, justly driven, without.

Precisely the opposite was found in the blessed and perfect Saviour. Would you know His character, His style, now that He is ushered in, in His own humble but holy and perfect announcement? "Lo I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me (His everlasting character), to do thy will, O God.—I am content to do it; yea, thy law is within my heart." This was His constant character, His perfectness as man. So we read in the course of His life;—"My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." This character was stamped on every circumstance; "He took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man:" and as in life He did always such things as pleased His Father, for He sought not His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him, so there was no limit to its extent any more than to its perfectness; for loving His own to the end, He became obedient unto death, the death of the cross; for though willingly

doing it, "this commandment had He received of His Father."

He had now ears dug for Him (Ps. xl. 6): the Lord God had opened them, and He was not rebellious, neither turned away back, but "gave His back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; nor hid His face from all that obedience brought Him into, power or no power; for He was crucified in weakness, though He liveth by the power of God. His power was the powerful service of God. His weakness the patience of all His will. So it was—obedience was the principle on which He acted in temptation; "It is written," was His reply ever to the tempter's suggestion; and when the tempter would thereupon have guilefully alleged a promise, "It is written, He shall give," &c., our Lord met him by the answer, "It is written;" an answer showing the principle of obedience as contrasted with the principle of assumption, of the assumption even of true privilege:—a most important truth! But of this more hereafter. Perhaps I have said more than is needful on this; for the one sentence, "Lo I come to do thy will, O God," to the believer, stamps the character, and fills up the principle of the life of the Holy Jesus. He was the type of obedience. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered."

The essential contrast to this is in Antichrist; "The king shall do according to his will."—This is *his* characteristic; not regarding any, "he shall do according to his will, and magnify himself."

Let us now trace other parts of Scripture. In Exodus the word of the Lord to Moses is, "Thus shalt thou say, Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on Eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself; now therefore if ye will *obey my voice indeed*," &c. And all the people answered together, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." I speak not here of their competency to fulfil their undertaking, but of the principle of association,—the only principle on which God could deal with man, or man walk with God.

So, in the blessing of Abraham, in the 22nd of Genesis,

the Lord closes with this—"Because thou hast obeyed my voice." And Jeremiah takes up the word of the Lord to Israel, by Moses (chap. vii. 22), "For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices; but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people; and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you."

Such is the tenor of the covenant on which the existing comforts of the land were held, as detailed in Deut. xxviii., after they had broken the former. Such is the principle of the restoration-covenants of faith, when they had lost the fruits of the former, as given in Deut. xxx.; "shalt return, and shalt obey His voice, according to all that I commanded thee this day."

So, in the apostasy of Saul, in 15th of 1 Samuel, we find the same hinge of judgment,—“Why didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice.” Even as we find its principle and its perfection in our Lord’s constant walk—it is the character of the believer’s sanctification,—sanctified unto obedience and the blood of sprinkling” (1 Pet. i. 2). This is that to which the believer is sanctified; this the purpose, the object of his sanctification: so, where the contrary state is spoken of in Eph. ii., “Wherein in times past ye walked according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of *disobedience*.”

Nor does any thing ever affect this essential principle; nothing but sin can draw a man out of it; the doing our own will is always sin, always the acting of the old man, not subject to God, or it would do His will, not its own—the nature which does not bring in God, but acts for itself. The object of obedience may be in question, but self-will is always wrong. Thus Peter, when charged before the High Priest’s council with disobedience to their behests, does not plead a right to do his own will, a right to do what he pleased; he had no such right:—as towards God, it would have been the expression of self-will; he would not have been honouring God therein.

His word was not, 'I have a right to do what I like without reference to you;' but "We ought to obey God rather than men." It would have been really disobedience to have obeyed them; God would have been disobeyed in the result: he would have acquiesced, yea, taken a leading part in disobedience, as far as He was concerned.

Thus we find how the principle is preserved in all the trying circumstances of refusing subjection to human authority. It can be swerved from in no instance without breaking through the first and only principle of accepted relationship to God;—it is the only exercise, save praise, of life to God.

It appears to me that this principle is greatly lost sight of, and abused by all religious parties. As to this, they are divided into two great classes,—those who plead obedience, and those who plead liberty. Peter's answer, it seems to me, meets both. The dissenters, as a body, plead liberty—rights—the title to do, as regards men, what they please. The Churchmen claim obedience, and plead frequently the principle; but it is still to men, and not to God. 'We ought to obey God,' is the Christian's answer to both. 'We ought to *obey*,' I say to the Dissenter, who claims rights. 'We ought to obey *God*,' to the Churchman, who pleads the principle of obedience in the defence of all the corruptions which rest merely on the authority of man and his ways—'We ought to obey God *rather than man*.' How perfect is Scripture in setting in order the ways of men, the narrow path which no other power detects, as revealing the principles of the human mind, and judging them. Self-will is never right. Obedience to man is often wrong—disobedience to God.

The next thing I would mark in connection with this, is, that the commands of God, though the literal circumstances of blessing associated with them may be gone, never lose their power; for they are always, unless as connected with these blessings in detail, moral in their character; exhibiting and expressive of God; on which relationship to Him is necessarily founded. This is what the word in Deuteronomy, quoted by the Apostle, means: "It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven and bring it unto us, that we may

hear and do it, &c. But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy heart and in thy mouth, that thou mightest do all the words of this law." Now the Apostle calls this the righteousness of faith (Rom. x. 6), the force of which we shall see in a moment, if we examine the place where it occurs in Deuteronomy, and learn also the accuracy of scripture quotation; and that this quotation in Romans, as every thing else in scripture, is the mind of the Spirit of God. The statement of Moses was not the covenant on which, in literal obedience, they held the land; that would not have been the righteousness of faith. But the principle of *Do*, and then the blessing. It was, *besides, the covenant which was made with them at Horeb* (xxix. 1), and proceeds upon the ground of the total loss of the literal blessings, which were the result of literal obedience in the land:—"And it shall come to pass when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind, among all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey," &c.;—that is, after the covenant of literal obedience had been so broken, that they had lost the fruits of it in the possession of the land, and were driven out (at once the evidence that it was broken, and constituting the impossibility, in that exclusion from the land, of such literal obedience); thereon the Lord says, "For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven," &c. But it was nigh them; that which faith recognized in its power and principles; although, in exclusion from the land, its literal observance was impracticable. Here the Apostle took up the Jews, and planted them on the principle of the obedience or righteousness of faith (to them still "Lo-ammi"); that is, the confession of Messiah, at any time the great hope and comfort of their law to them, but specially while they were thus in bondage and sorrow. No other but a basis of faith could be available to them. This was its strength and surest object; while the obedience of faith for His name was withal spread to the nations also. The obedience of faith, whatever the state of, however apostate, the Church, is still the principle of all.

righteous individual conversation. It is not the exactitude of literal observance which is here imposed—that may be impossible. It was so with the Jews, when there was the highest exemplification of faithful obedience, as in Daniel, for example: neither is the oldness of the letter the character of the Christian dispensation; that is not the obedience of faith. But the obedience of faith, in the newness of the Spirit, is always open, and finds its path according to the spirituality, and therefore spiritual discernment, of the people seeking it; and upon this God rests it. Exact conformity to His mind may be, and surely was, accompanied by direct and immediate witness of blessing, such as we have not now, and could not have, because it would be the recognition of inconsistency, which God could not sanction, whatever be His individual prerogative of mercy. It was God's testimony of sanction to that which was His moral witness in the world. It is precisely in these circumstances that the obedience of faith comes in on which the blessing comes, as may be seen in Deut. xxx.; not the alliteration of literal ordinance, but the power of moral consistency, according to the expressed mind of God. Nothing can be more important than the position which the book of Deuteronomy holds in this respect, nor than the principle which it affords. The privileges attached to the dispensation were gone; obedience, in the literal sense, was impossible; the Ark was gone; the Urim and Thummim were gone. The Temple, where literal services could be accomplished, was desolate and burned with fire, where their prescriptive services alone could be performed; and they were captives moving to and fro. What then could be done? The word was nigh them, in their heart and in their mouth, that they might do it. Here was the principle of God's accepting favour: here is the principle on which alone, in darkness, we can walk acceptably with God. Compare the 50th and 51st chapters of Isaiah, where we have the application of this—the progressive triple length of obedience; and then, "Awake, put on thy strength, O arm of the Lord!"

On the other hand, the notion of tradition neither recognizes nor amends this state of things; it does not

recognize it, for it assumes the literal state of things precisely, but does not fulfil it. It does not acknowledge the evil and fallen state of the Church. It assumes the continuance of that literal exactitude of services: and that these being present, *there* is the security of the Church. It acknowledges not that it has lost its glory in the display of present power to the world; it says, 'Give me my ordinances, and all is well;' not seeing that it has been deprived of power, because of its moral departure from its constitution with God. 'It may have been God's wisdom so to order this dispensation, I speak merely of the fact. Neither does tradition amend it—it puts the Church wholly on the wrong ground. The spirit of obedience, the righteousness of faith, is that which we need, if indeed fallen. Though we had the most certain information of traditional forms of worship or ordinance, it would not make the Church of the living God. It is not the sign, nor suited to the humiliation of the Church in its fallen and low condition. The perpetuity of ordinances is not its position in Babylon, but the spirit of humbled obedience—the word nigh it. The present spirit of obedience to the word nigh them, is that which marks the spirit of faith, and acknowledgment of God, not making haste. If we repent, we may, according to the word to Ezekiel, be shewn more. To mock the fallen Church with tradition, is but a bitter and death-bearing substitute for the living power of the Divine presence, or the obedience of faith, the only sure ground on which to stand, if we have fallen from the manifested glory of it.

But to trace the other parts of the subject:—

To shew that it is the preliminary of blessing, few words, after what has been said, will be needed. "If any man will do His will," says our Lord, "he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." Now this is precisely the obedience of faith; and shews that moral preparation for blessing given, is conversion of will into the spirit of obedience, *εἰ τις θέλει*. It is not the literal fact of outward act, but the spirit of mind (which will be therefore necessarily shewn in outward acts when that will is set before him). The next point is to *do my will*; then he

shall know the gift of knowledge founded on the spirit of obedience; for what is the avail to confer gift on the disobedient, unless God should provide for His own dishonour?

I would refer also, without dwelling on them, to Luke vi. 4—9; Matt. iii. 15; John xiii. 16, 17; and xii. 26. The same truth is very distinctly taught us in John xiv. 21—23, where love to Jesus is thus definitely marked, and blessing marked as consequent upon it:—"He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him." Nothing can be more distinct—nothing more distinct than the sovereignty of grace to the sinner, through the obedience of Christ; the sureness of blessing to the saint in the order of obedience to the Word. The chastenings of unchanging love, I speak not of here. But the doctrine is very express in the Word, as to the order of all special gift, that it is adherence to the obedience of Christ, that it hangs upon, and finds its scope and exercise in obedience. There may be an extraordinary act of everlasting sovereignty, as Balaam and Caiaphas; but this is not ground the Church of God can go upon; these are not given to the Church as examples, unless they would associate themselves with the apostasy as God's order. God may set light to His Church upon the most dangerous rock on the shores of destruction; there may be beacons all round them, but no attractive guide to the place where they stand, though we may bless the hand that set them there, a warning for none to approach, though a guide to all that pass. Unhappy people, the witness of the ruin that rolls around themselves.

One would have thought that it had been amply enough, to have seen the broad and essential principle on which the whole order of Christian truth is founded, to have determined the Christian mind as to its righteousness and judgment: one would have thought that its conclusion would have been intuitive, and the fruit of the Spirit shewn at once in the recognition of obedience as the path of the saint: that path which, as a saint led of

the Spirit, is the only one in which the Spirit can lead. But the enemy of our souls is not met by the simplicity of truth, because of the want of simplicity of our minds; according as they are not spiritual, and in any sort affect any thing not the object of, to which they are not led by, the Spirit; therein the simplicity of truth fails to keep them, and the power of the enemy can avail itself of its subtlety against them. If there be any measure of positive, though mixed spirituality, apparent rejection of the Word would not be received: but Satan does not so proceed: he does not therefore propose disobedience, but modifies obedience, proposes preliminaries to it, or substitutes something instead.

Nor does Satan deceive the saints, or those under the form of saints, with an open and simple lie; they are not the subjects of that: he has not ordinarily done so. If Satan said, 'Ye shall be as Gods (*Elohim*),' One far above all created beings repeated, "The man is become one of us, knowing good and evil." But Oh! what a store of accompanying evils and ruin come in upon the act of disobedience founded on this devil-used truth! Using it out of place, suppressing what went along with it when man acted on it, was the foundation of the ruin that came upon the world. We must then meet Satan, not only by the simplicity of truth, which is the happiest way—which is happiness; but when our weakness and inconsistency open the way to his guile, by the wisdom of the word which applies to the case: which the unbounded and illimitable goodness of our God has provided for the weakness and necessities of His children; knowing the subtleties of their enemy, and providing for them who are assailable by reason of that weakness. Thus the Lord, far, most far from inconsistency or evil, but assailed by that which would act upon ours, met, by the testimony of the Word, the subtlety of the enemy of our souls. What subtlety! an unconditional promise; a promise to Him, alleged to be His as Son of God, by virtue of His privilege:—"If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down hence, *for it is written.*" O high-drawn wit, a refinement of evil! Was it not true? and was not Satan a liar? and could

Satan produce a true promise of God, would not God be true to it? If thou be the Son of God, act faith upon this promise; claim its effect, shew the power and glory which belong to this dispensation. And how bright the glory, how fair the witness, how singular and suitable the testimony to what he was! What strength imparted in his service, what foundation to claim the credence to the mission which presented him in this very character! Why not do it? What reason could be alleged? Must they not be the cavils of unbelief? Were the promises not true to the Son of God? Would God prove Himself a liar? It was the characteristic honour and place of Messiah; the ministering angels of the dispensation were to approve their Head in it; what could be more suitable or approved? But it was Satan's proposal—the Lord's total refusal. If a Son, He had yet made Himself a servant. There was no command on which to act; had there been, ten thousand temples would not have stopped His course, be they ever so goodly, ever so high, adorned with ever ~~such~~ goodly stones or gifts.

It is remarkable, too, in connection with what we have said as to Deuteronomy, that all our Lord's answers were taken from them. The word "Lo-ammi" had never been erased from the badge of the Jewish people, since the day of their captivity; they bore it still upon their forehead: but the Lord took the part of scripture precisely applicable in their present estate. He took the phylacteries of God therein afforded, and bound them round *His* forehead; and Satan could not touch Him then. And here was another most important principle connected with this subject. The promises of God were true, and the gifts and calling of God without repentance (and this passage refers directly hereto,—to these very Jews), but they did not apply to their then present state. Satan would have used them so; but the path of obedience was to understand the mind of God, and the Lord applied, in their acknowledged apostasy, that which God had applied to that state of things.

The Jews applied the promises to themselves, without the recognition of their fallen estate: and herein showed

that they had not the Spirit of God ; and, by their application of these promises of God, came under the power of Satan, and were led of him. The Lord declined them, and rejected and baffled Satan. He took and kept the path of simple obedience : He rejected tradition ; He rejected the promises : aye, He rejected the promises used not in the path of obedience and the understanding of the Divine Word. The first evidence, the first point of the teaching of the Divine Spirit, of the wisdom of God in Christ, who was the Wisdom, is the apostate state itself—where the Church is fallen. Here is the key, the at once solution of all the rest ; where this is, it is and must be the first instruction of the Spirit to us in our Church-acting capacity ; and all our conduct flows from it ; and God has expressly provided the obedience of faith for such a time, never, never deserting His own, wherever the apostasy may be ; for He cannot, and does not turn away, nor is His faith made of none effect ; and in the time of all these difficulties, the Scriptures are able to make us *wise* unto salvation (through faith which is in Christ Jesus), and are profitable, &c. ; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to *every* good work. O what a blessed word ! what a blight upon the holders of tradition as the pretenders to any light which should guide them further than the perfectness of the man of God,—the strength, the comfort, the wisdom of the divine Word. May we be occupied with His commandments !

Let us turn to the third part of the subject,—that obedience is the order of special gift. We have here direct and topical instruction of Scripture on the subject, in the 15th chapter of John's gospel. Of the principle of it, we have an illustrious instance in Samson and his history. There was one separated to God, sanctified for the Lord, and therefore put into the order of defined obedience ; his hair was not to be cut. While the commandment and precept were observed, his strength was with him. There might have seemed little connection between long or uncut hair, and all-overcoming strength ; but God was in it : and an obeyed honoured God is a God of strength. It was God's strength, and given to

one so definitely recognizing Him ; it was a gift hanging (as to its retention) on obedience, consistency with the undertaken vow of separatedness to God. This secret betrayed to the world the corrupting influence which had wound round the deceived Nazarite : his locks were cut by one nominally the friend and associate of the God-devoted man ; in truth, the sure ally of the Philistines and suited instrument of Satan's power. Once shorn of his strength, and in the Philistines' hands, his eyes are put out ; and if in any sort he regains his strength, it is blindly to destroy himself with his enemies. That which I insist on here, however, is the sign of separation to obedience, being the order and hinge of the possession of the given strength, the presence or absence of the one depending upon the presence or absence of the other, however unconscious the unhappy victim was of the strength of others thereupon against him ; a sorrowful yet instructive history to our weak and wayward will.

But I have referred to the 15th of John, as direct instruction upon the subject : it is most exact as to it. The Lord had stated the truth as to personal blessing, the special gift of His manifested presence, as contrasted with the world, in the 14th chapter : " He that hath my commandments," (how different from a tradition we have not got)* " and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me ; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him."

* The Lord's commandments are always moral, and not of ordinance, with the exception of those two ordinances which separate the Church from the world. Ordinances are always separation ; if I have any prescribed act, that act distinguishes me and connects me with all those who have it as a body, contrasted with those who have not such prescribed form ; hence all peculiar ordinances minister to separation among Christians, those that are God's, to separation of them from the world corporately. I read, " we have no such custom," where evil was sought to be introduced, never of any circumstance, *we* have such an ordinance. I do not think the Apostles themselves had the power to ordain any thing, but as morally conducive to the good of the Church. " So ordain I in all the Churches," was the common order profitable for the glory of God.

Here the broad principle of general blessing is laid down, and we may observe what is most important in it—"he that hath my commandments."

Let us turn to chap. xv. 4, "Abide in me, and I in you; as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye expect ye abide in me." This is practical abiding, or it could not be a command: abiding in Christ as the True Vine, not in any thing else; for the Vine of the Earth, its grapes shall be cast into the winepress of wrath. Again, ver. 7, "If ye abide in me, *and my words abide in you*, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you;" and in the 10th, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love;" that love from which all the gift and blessing flow, "even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love." Would the Church presumptuously assume a higher prerogative of the sureness of the Father's love, than the Lord Himself, who says, as to the order of its continuance, "As I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love?" Can any thing be more definite and clear, that the ground of the assumption of blessing, the continuance of gift or blessing, is continuance, in the words of Christ, of His words in the Church? The assertion is not more clear than the ground of it is most plain and intelligible,—the Holy commandment. God's power, His glory, would otherwise serve as the sanction of unrighteousness. So in the 14th verse, stating the ground on which the communications of His mind, special revelations would rest, He says, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." Nothing can be more definite, nothing more certain than its thrice repeated accuracy of assertion.

The order of God to Christians is, not obedience upon blessing, but blessing on obedience; not to wait for blessing in order to obey, but to act on the command, and the blessing follows. And *this is faith*; there would be no faith if the blessing came first. Even Christ obeyed before he had the blessing,—speaking of Him as the self-humbled man. So we are justified, and in our obedience are the consequent blessings; to Him that *hath* shall more be given. It is the business of spirituality

to ascertain His will ; to be, in our measure, of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord. “ Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business ? ” If it be said, Yes, but the Church had to wait for the presence of the Spirit, before it could do any thing, I answer, True ; before, *properly speaking, it was a Church* ; but when it had received it, all that was so dictated became the subject-matter of the obedience of all who were under the influence of the Spirit thenceforward ; and it was denying the Spirit, to say, ‘ We must wait for the Spirit,’ to obey what the Spirit has taught. It was mocking the Spirit ; the Spirit of God had revealed it, and spirituality of mind would discern the holy purport of the thing—would surely do so, and act on it according to the power given, waiting for all other gift. Such is the necessary consequence of spirituality ; and any thing else is only denying the Spirit, not waiting for it. “ He that is spiritual,” says the Apostle, “ let him acknowledge that the things which I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord ; ” and if so, what then ? *they are to be obeyed* as the occasion and skill of obedience arises. Used in obedience, the gifts certainly were to be received in it also ; for we are sanctified unto obedience. The Church is sanctified unto obedience ; becomes, by conversion, obedient : that is the thing done with it in time ; the man is turned to obey God, instead of doing his own will :—“ Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ? ” and it receives blessing, it walks in obedience—the obedience of love ; and it continues to receive a blessing ; disobeys and receives judgment, only for the long-suffering waiting upon its rebelliousness.

On the whole, the Scripture is plain, as the principle is uniform ; that obedience is the way of blessing, and that we are not to wait for power to obey a command, but to obey it that we may find power. The Lord did not restore the hand that he might stretch it out and shew it, but ordered the man to stretch it out, that it might be restored : and this is true in all possible cases. The *Lord* is obedient ; therefore he is exalted to the place of power, to be Giver of gifts, He took upon Him the form of a servant, and became obedient, and that even to death : wherefore also God hath highly exalted Him.

Now while the redemption of the Church is herein complete (for by one man's obedience, many shall be made righteous), in the work *in* the Church, obedience always goes before the *manifestation* of blessing. Thus Saul, struck to the ground, says, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" and the Lord answered, "Go into Damascus, and there it shall be told thee what thou oughtest to do:" he went, and received comfort, and strength, and blessing, through the means of Ananias, there sent to him; he acted in obedience in the first instance. So the poor blind man, in the days of the Lord, being, in the flesh, a pattern and type of the whole case:—"Go wash in the pool of Siloam: and he went and washed, and came seeing;" and having been faithful to this, was able to teach his teachers, because he had obeyed the Word: and being cast out for it, the Lord hearing this to be the case, finds him, and reveals Himself to him. Is it then that we act without the obedience of faith? We are so led: "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much." "Go wash seven times in Jordan," is an humbling thing, instead of having the Prophet's hand struck over the Leper; but going and washing, proved that he believed the testimony of God—the Spirit of God to be in the prophet; it owned the Spirit, when it was in the obedience of faith, and the blessing came. So in the word we own the Spirit of God, the sure Spirit of God in the word, and act upon it; which shews that we own the Spirit of God, and that He is able to bless, and the blessing comes from that Spirit vindicating His truth. Whatever blessing is inconsistent with obedience, is not really a blessing in result, though it should have the form of an answer to claim on the faithfulness of God; as we see in the quails in the wilderness. Our whole inquiry must just be, What is the will of God? The blessing of the Spirit goes with it, for that is the testimony of the Spirit; and, taking it as the way of the blessing, is honouring the Spirit. Therefore the very acknowledging the Lord, is made a matter of obedience. It is the command of God to acknowledge His Son, to honour Him as we honour the Father. This is the work of God, that we believe on Him whom He hath sent.

Yea, the Lord, while He shewed that He loved the Father, yet, in His yielding Himself to death' declares, "This commandment have I received of my Father:" and the Gospel is sent "for the obedience of faith, of all nations, for His name." The operation of the Spirit is to make us obey: there is no owning of the Spirit but in obedience; and obedience is the evidence that we do acknowledge the Spirit, that we are led of it:—that which God will own, whether the world own us or not. And I suppose that the highest progress of Spiritual Life is not energy, but the enlarged discovery that all is within the sphere of obedience; and that all our efforts are so far profitable as they are within obedience—God's prescribed order; and that all without is the energy of our own will, and evil. Does the Spirit of evil or our own will lead us in obedience? Clearly not! We have only then to plead the word, and we necessarily plead the operation of the Spirit of God in us; its energy is but to enable us, and to reduce others to the same thing. Our having the commandment is the sign of an obedient heart taught of God—the communicated apprehension of the Divine mind as in the Word, spiritual communion with God giving that discernment; our keeping them, of a patient will under Him to follow on as led and established by Him, and in spite of, and overcoming the enemy: God working in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. To lean upon tradition is to prove that *we have not His commandments*; to wait, as men speak, for His Spirit, is to prove that we are not inclined to keep them; both concurring to show that we do not really love Him; and the latter, the merest though most subtle sophistry, and making us deny obedience to the word of the Spirit, in order that we may obtain His presence; a way as strange in its proposal, as it is contrary to the word of God; as we have seen in John xv.: denying that we have it, whereby alone we can have it or obey it, whereby we have it more abundantly; a hiding of the talent in the napkin, as though God were an austere God. Our whole dependance then is on the Spirit of God, for we have no strength in ourselves; the object of our desires and prayers, the great and

continual object, all hangs on His presence: for by it alone we recognise ever what the Father and the Son are to us in the blessed counsels of His will,—we recognise it as a present thing. The Spirit is the immediate agent in all divinely led human conduct, as, indeed, in all operation on Creation. But the measure of the Spirit is known by the obedience of faith—the understanding obedience of faith to that which that Spirit has laid before us in the word of Truth—the true Spirit of God. Whatever its power, we shall ever seek its increase as to its exercise under the Divine will. It will ever lead us on further and further into the path of obedience, and will unfailingly sanction all our previous footsteps in this way; for indeed, howsoever little known, itself has led us in them.

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