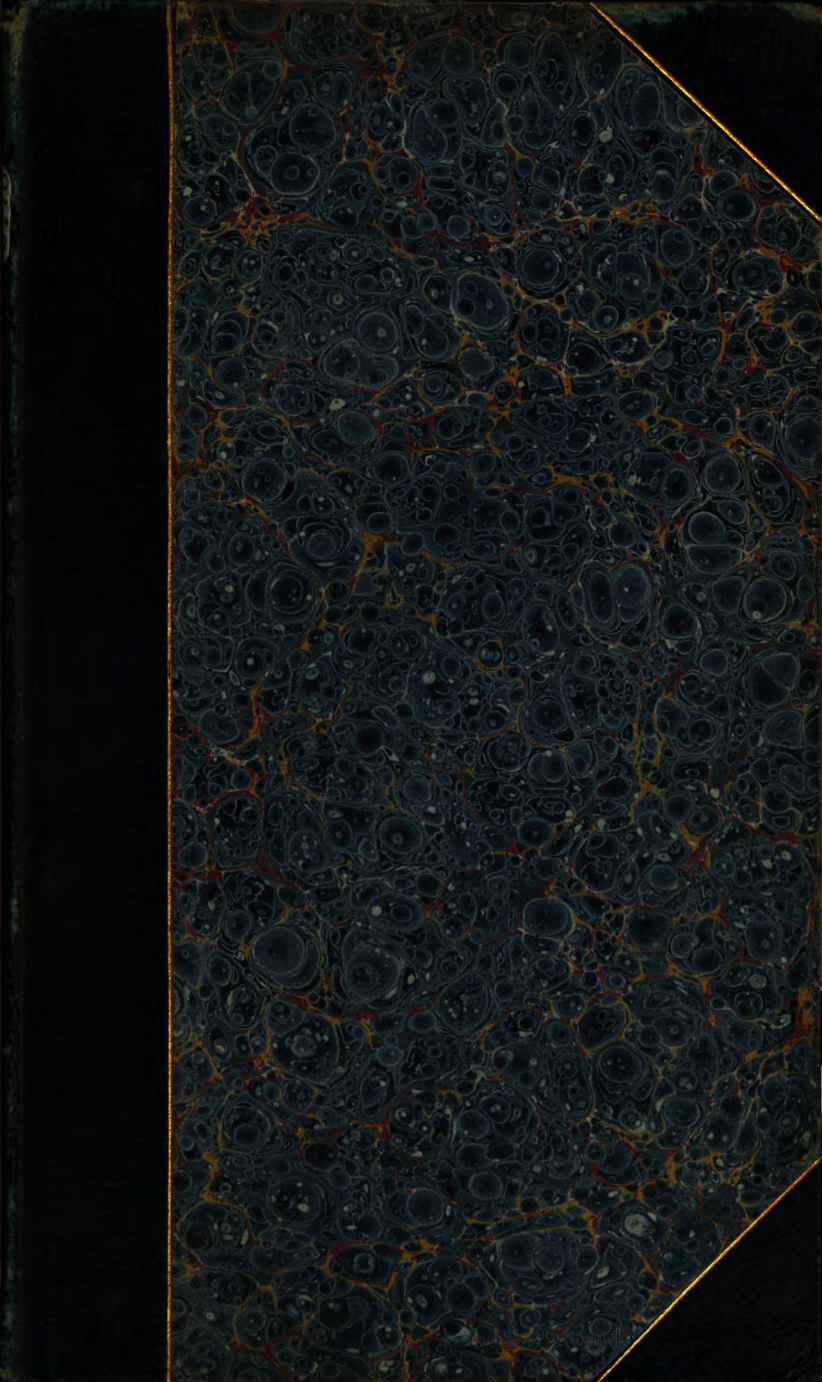

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EXPEDIENT, OR OBEDIENT.

AN APPEAL

TO ALL WHO LOVE THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IN
SINCERITY,

ON THE SUBJECT OF

The Church of God and Priesthood.

BY

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I PURPOSE to draw the history of the Church and priesthood, in the fewest possible words, as a basis for the appeal which I would make. Let facts from Scripture, from history, and from present practice, speak, and let those who are elect unto obedience test all by the word of God.

1. The Church of God on earth, which is the body of Christ, is ONE, holy, and universal. Chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, its unity is perfect in Him, and is established and maintained by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost (Eph. i, 4, 22, 23; ii, 21, 22; iv, 4—6; 1 Cor. xii, 13). This unity man cannot mar; no insubjection of the creature touches it; it is complete and holy in Christ (Col. ii, 13).

2. The unity thus true in Christ was intended by God to be manifested on earth:—accordingly, at Pentecost a *visible expression* thereof was seen. All they who received the Holy Ghost were of one heart and of one mind. They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and, breaking bread from house to house, did hereby testify to

the fact that "we, being many, are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread" (Acts ii; 1 Cor. x, 17).

3. The enemy, however, soon sowed tares; and, while apostles still lived, defection, *i.e.*, apostasy* from the truth, had set in, of which Jude gives the history in his epistle.

The epistles to the Church at Corinth show how rife party spirit was there, and how it was condemned by the apostle as carnal (1 Cor. iii, 1—4). Still, *the* Church at Corinth comprised *all* in that city who called on the name of Jesus Christ; and, though they so grievously abused the Lord's supper, that the apostle could not call the feast the *Lord's* supper, their heretical conduct had not reached so far as to having separate and antagonistic tables. Paul could say of them, "when ye *come together* into one place" (1 Cor. xi, 20); while his exhortation to them was, to be "perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. i, 12). This was the will of God concerning them; for this they were responsible to Him, and He was their sufficiency for it.

There be some of no mean repute, who maintain that nothing short of a "continuous miracle" could have maintained this expression of unity and purity. Do they mean thereby to affirm that obedience is the result of a miracle? Surely, surely, they must have overlooked the solemn fact that every one must give account of himself to God. Responsibility for a saint comes in on the ground of the forgiveness of all his sins, through the death and resurrection of Jesus; but there is a judgment according to works for all that. How many servants of Christ will

* Appendix.

have their works burnt up, though they themselves will be saved, yet so as by fire! (1 Cor. iii.) If a "continuous miracle" were needed to enable the Church to be "perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment," according to the express direction of the apostle (1 Cor. i, 10), we might, in the review of that which is our shame, complain that this interposition of God was withheld from us, instead of humbling ourselves under His mighty hand because we have not obeyed His voice. Love asks, "What wilt thou have me to do?" measuring its obedience by the word of God, and not by the rules of false expediency.

4. The Church having left her first love, and the apprehension of her "heavenly calling," as "born from above," and "set down with Christ in heavenly places," the call to her was to "repent" (Rev. ii, 5); but she repented not. Desiring, however, to maintain the form of godliness when she no longer "held the Head" of *power*, she was driven to walk by sight and not by faith, and so gradually returned to Judaism for a visible form and structure, adding to her number by ordinances (as the national establishment of Israel did by circumcision) all who were born after the flesh. This proceeded by slow yet certain steps until it arrived at the full expression of Popery, with a total uprooting of the very foundations of the faith.

5. The Reformation again brought to light the fundamental truth of justification by faith; but the reformers, bent, with undivided attention, on the recovery of the pure Gospel, retained many of the Judaizing forms, unable, or perhaps unwilling, to go further than the grand object attained. The Bible was indeed once more thrown open, and once more

was the glad tidings proclaimed,—“Through the name of Jesus, whosoever believeth in Him receiveth the remission of sins;” but here the Reformation stopped. With an open Bible, the reformers still rejected the commandments of God that they might keep their own traditions; and because Popery had counterfeited catholic and apostolic truth, that which was *Scripturally* catholic and apostolic was condemned as Papistical; while, after the fashion of that which they had renounced, the headship of man usurped the place of Christ, and the stereotyped rules of man set aside the present guidance of the Holy Ghost by the word.

6. Light breaking in, dissent was a righteous indignation at having to subscribe to these Judaizing forms. Dissenters, obeying the light so far as they had it, insisted that Christ, and not Cæsar, was alone Head over all things to the Church; but here also dissent stopped. The traditions of men, in some form or other, practically hindered the “Congregational Churches” from recognizing the unity of the body; while the presence, and present guidance, of the Holy Ghost Himself was as truly denied as in National Establishments, and sectarianism henceforth flowed in with rapid and ruinous strides.

7. Human confederacy, or alliance, seeing the evil results of sectarianism, and the value of co-operation, devised a means of co-operating, without attempting, or even wishing, to give up the evil that hindered it! The matters of difference which led to sectarianism were therefore pronounced to be “non-essentials,” which might be firmly held by the members of the confederacy, provided they would “agree to differ,” yet come together for mutual edification and the furtherance of the gospel; with

the further agreement, tacitly come to, that, for the time being, both the word of God and their own mouths should be closed on the very subject which was, confessedly, the practical hindrance to the co-operation they aimed at; each one claiming a right on every suitable occasion to stand up for the sectarianism, the grounds of which they felt compelled to leave when they would *obey God*. Such is the "Evangelical Alliance."

8. Obedience owns the defection in which all are involved, but claims no warrant to re-cast the Church of God after apostolic order. All attempts thereat have failed, not simply because of the evil that dwelleth in us, but because they were not warranted by God. God never sets up afresh that which, being originally set up "good" by Him, has been marred, in the expression thereof, in the hands of man. He brings in a better thing. Man's own history is a proof of it. Regenerate man is not a restored, a reformed creature, but a new creation in a risen Christ (2 Cor. v, 17). Every successive dispensation, from the fall, has been the bringing in something fresh, as a stepping stone to the "better thing," which, "at sundry times and in divers manners," was held out as a hope to the fathers. Man, first in innocence, then without law, afterwards under law, only gave proof that he could not stand by himself; that no good thing dwelt in him after he fell; and that law could neither restrain nor correct him. In the fulness of time the seed came to whom the promises were made (Gal. iii, iv), but Him they crucified. Heaven's rule on earth, in visible power and glory, under Christ, was thus postponed, and He returned to the Father. Occasion was thus given for the bringing out the mystery hid from ages

and generations (Eph. iii), the mystery of the Bride, or body of Christ, in which there is neither Jew nor Gentile, formed down here by the coming and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and, by the same Spirit, associated with Christ in the heavenlies, and responsible to bear witness for Him, to represent Him, to shew forth His praises, who is the very life of life in them that believe; and who has called them to share with Him glory, honour and immortality. But, O, how has the fine gold become dim! Well, restoration to a united, visible expression of this wondrous unity with one another in Christ, we are not to look for here, but a better thing is prepared for us; we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the rapture and transformation of the living together with them, when we shall meet the Lord in the air on His descent from heaven with a shout. *Then* shall we *gather together* unto Him (1 Thess. iv, 14—17; 2 Thess. ii, 1). What a *holy* and united gathering that will be! How should we, yea, how shall we who look for His appearing, purify ourselves even as He is pure. There is a sanctifying power in this blessed hope. He that hath this hope in him, is separated, and must be separated from the world. It is not “morbid sensitiveness” that thus separates, but the very principle and power of the hope itself. A christian, who knows his “heavenly calling,” cannot be a political patriot. Jesus might shed tears over Jerusalem, for He was their King; but an earth-rejected King draws to Himself heaven-born subjects, who are to follow Him to heaven. His example, as one of the earthly nation of Israel, is *not* left us to copy; our citizenship is in heaven itself. But are we, on this account, given over to evil, *i.e.*, to pursue our own ways? Far, far from it.

“If ye love me, keep my commandments,” is still the word of Jesus to us; and He Himself is our sufficiency for such a walk, such an upward and onward path, in separation from “state connection,” and from dissenting traditions. Obedience owns that co-operation is good; but it hearkens to the word of God, which says, “to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams;” and though we cannot “restore and rebuild,” we need not disobey. Though we have lost much which we do not hope to regain, we still have Christ and His word; we still have the indwelling Spirit, as that for which we are called to give thanks, and to which we have to be subject; and not to be forever praying for, as though He had not yet come; and by Him are we called to communion with and subjection to Christ, as our only Master, God, and Lord (Jude iv, Gr.). Christ and the open word, the word obeyed and a good conscience, this is the saint’s privilege. No realized, no influential good, is guaranteed to any who are not themselves obedient to the word, that is, to God, whose word it is; to the Son, whose word it is; to the Holy Ghost, whose word it is. “He that is of God, heareth God’s word.” The converse is not mine, but His who spake the words;—“Ye, therefore, hear them not, because ye are not of God” (John viii, 47). I have simply to state God’s truth; the day of decision, when “we all shall be made manifest (*φανερωθῆναι*) before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Cor. v, 10), will determine who obeyed the voice of the Lord, and who did not. Good intentions are a poor exchange for obedience.

Obedience also has something to say about priesthood.

Before the flood each worshipper brought and offered his own sacrifice (Gen. iv). After the flood, and before the law, the head of the family offered, as we learn from Gen. viii.

PRIESTHOOD UNDER THE LAW.

On the failure of Israel to obey the voice of God, and to keep His covenant, which, had they done, would have resulted in their being a kingdom of priests (Ex. xix, 5, 6), the tribe of Levi was taken, instead of the first-born (Ex. xii, 1), for the service of the tabernacle (Num. xviii, 21), with Aaron over all as high priest. We learn hence that official representative priesthood, as a class distinction from the rest of the one family of Israel, was the result of failure on their part, and was established to meet that failure, and to keep up communion with God on the part of a people who were henceforth to worship afar off; the way into the holiest not yet being made manifest (Heb. ix, 8; Luke i, 9, 10).

PRIESTHOOD UNDER THE GOSPEL.

“Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by His own blood entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption” (Heb. ix, 11, 12); and all believers being “in Him that is true” (1 John v, 20), are constituted a royal priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet. ii, 5), having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus (Heb. x, 19). There, whither our High Priest is gone before, is our “place of worship.” In Christ we are now brought within the vail, distance between God and the believer is

annihilated; the gulf which sin and the law made has been bridged by the blood of Jesus; we *are* brought nigh (Eph. ii, 13); and, *in the righteousness of God*, we *are* that which was proposed to the nation Israel, *on condition* of their *own* obedience; with this further contrast, that we are a kingdom of priests in the heavenlies, having now life eternal in Him who is the resurrection and the life; whereas, they would have been a kingdom of priests on earth, and for earth only, and not suffered to continue by reason of death (Heb. vii, 23). Thus we see that official representative priesthood *by* man *for* man is abolished. To restore it is to restore law, to bring sin to remembrance, to deny Christ, to shut heaven.

PRIESTHOOD UNDER POPERY.

The evil just named is what has theoretically been practised by the Papacy; the one offering of Christ for the remission of sins being set aside by the institution of the oft-repeated pretended sacrifice of the mass; while an official priesthood, as a necessary result, is separated from the professing body to transact with God for men. To them, having power to bind and loose committed to them, confession of sin is to be made. Thus is the worshipper once more put far off, as in Judaism, with this awful difference, that, while Judaism stood as God's appointment, though the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest, there was access to God through the typical sacrifices; whereas, now that Christ has come, and legal sacrifices with official priesthood are abolished, being buried in the grave of Christ, a sacerdotal caste *bars access to God*, in that it assumes

the place of Christ, who is sole Priest *for* others, denies Him, and tramples under foot His finished work.

PRIESTHOOD IN THE ANGLICAN ESTABLISHMENT.

In the English National Establishment, the pretended and most blasphemous sacrifice of the mass is denounced, and the one all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ for the remission of sins is re-asserted ; but the official priesthood, the sacerdotal caste, to “perform divine service” *for* others, after Levitical fashion, with authority to forgive and to retain sins, *by virtue of their priestly office*, is retained ; so that, although not sacrificing priests, as in Popery, yet “the office and work of a priest” being kept up, and the excluding rails, within which the sacerdotal caste alone can minister, not being removed from around the “honest deal table,” no wonder that it should soon be elevated again into an “altar,” and that they who have *power to absolve* should demand of the penitent the confession of his sins to those in whose hands *such power is committed by the bishop*. That this power is given to the candidate for priests’ orders no one dares deny ; the words used by the bishop are, “Receive the Holy Ghost for the *office and work of a priest* Whose sins thou dost forgive they are forgiven, and whose sins thou dost retain they are retained.” Official priesthood, therefore, is not only not against the laws of the Ecclesiastical Establishment to which they belong, whose tendencies are so toward Rome, but they are in strict conformity therewith. Where, then, I may ask, is the ground for declaiming against it by the evangelical clergy, who, in their

own official position, accept the very essence of the evil they condemn? while the very words of our risen Lord are made subservient to the re-establishing a priestly caste, which it cost Him His death to abolish.

I know it is affirmed that the power of "loosing," committed to the "priest," is only by *preaching the gospel*. In consulting the Acts of the Apostles, I believe that to have been all the power which the apostles understood themselves to be endowed with. But there is no question that, as regards the Anglican priest, the power committed to him to *forgive* and to *retain* sins is *by virtue of his sacerdotal office*. The proof of it is, that to the *deacon*, whom the bishop may license to *preach the gospel*, this *super-added priestly authority* is not given—the deacon *may not read the absolution*! Thus does Anglican ordination sever from preaching the gospel that which God hath attached to it, and, taking "the key" out of the hands of the evangelist, places it, as the Pope does, in the hands of a sacerdotal caste!

I know that they who are in "priests' orders" constantly sign themselves "presbyters," as though it were synonymous with "priest;" but this is a mere subterfuge, to escape from the damaging fact, that, to all intents and purposes, theirs is a sacerdotal caste. Besides, the assumption by the "priest" of the *bishop's* designation is virtually to merge the two first "orders" into one, and thus to overthrow what the ordination service, without and contrary to all scripture proof, says is so "evident," even that there were three orders of ministers, viz., bishop, priest, and deacon, in Christ's Church. I should be insulting, surely, the learning of my readers among the "clergy" to enter into proof

that presbyter, elder, overseer, and bishop are *identical*. For the sake of others, however, I may just say, that presbyter is a Greek word in an English dress, meaning elder; and that bishop, *episcopos*, is a Greek word in an English dress, meaning overseer, while, by comparing Acts xx, 17 with 28, and Tit. i, 5 with 7, it will be "evident," to all who are not wilfully blind, that the presbyter and bishop are, as already remarked, one and the same office.

CLERICAL ORDERS.

One word with regard to "orders." Would any of you, who have been bold in controversy against Popery, meet a popish priest in argument in defence of your own orders? Why, you know that the same popish priest, if he renounced his allegiance to Rome, would require no more than a *license* from an Anglican bishop to preach in the pulpits of the Establishment; his ordination, received at the hands of the blaspheming priest at Rome, being counted valid! This being the case, you *must* uphold the figment of apostolical succession; in all consistency (I was going to say, honesty) you are bound to it; nay, your orders utterly fall to the ground without it; and *with it*, what have you? Why, you have a pretended warrant for the real sin of your sacerdotal caste, with the additional sin of bringing in the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, in the use of His solemn words to the apostles, to sanction the evil! Some, who see the positive evil and folly of maintaining succession to office by unbroken links from the apostles (insensible to the fact that, in so disowning it, Anglican episcopal orders altogether fail), urge that it is only the (more *seemingly* humble) succes-

sion of apostolic *practice* that they maintain in ordaining ministers. I ask, Where did you ever find apostles *practising the sin of—exalting*, I was going to say; but, if it be not truth, it is more faithful to say—*degrading* a servant of Christ into a sacerdotal caste distinction after Levitical fashion, in direct antagonism with the “present truth?”

Many christians profess to be greatly shocked at men of God meeting for worship, and “breaking bread” (Acts xx, 7), without the presence of one *thus* ordained to lead, to officiate, and to “administer the sacrament,” who, nevertheless, quietly accept the sin connected with all that solemn travestie of truth enacted at the ordination of the “priest” by the bishop, who owes his “appointment” to the favour of the prime minister, and the compulsory process of the *congé d’elire*; a process well described by a clergyman of great eminence, as “little better than an insult offered to the cathedral clergy.”

What, then, it will be asked, “Are *all* teachers?” Is there no distinction between those who minister the word and take the oversight of the flock, and those who are ministered to? Is there no rule on the one side, and no subjection on the other? Most emphatically do I affirm that *some* only are teachers, and that rule, and subjection to rule, are insisted on by God in His word. Who can read the 13th of Hebrews and deny it? The Epistle to the Philip-pians was addressed to “all the saints” there, “with the overseers and deacons;” and when Paul was at Miletus, “he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the Church.” But the setting “*some* in the body” as apostles, teachers, pastors (1 Cor. xii, 28; Eph. iv), did not result in forming them into a *distinct class*, with ecclesiastical titles, such as Pro-

testant ministers have borrowed from Rome, and with white vestments which they have borrowed from Judaism. They who are the gifts of Christ to the Church, called by the Holy Ghost, and giving themselves to reading, prayer and meditation, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, will have a place given them in the conscience and affections of the saints, and should be highly esteemed in love for their works' sake, as they that must give account (1 Thess. v). Full well do they know, as they "wait on their ministering," the absolute needs-be of being upheld therein by Christ, and of present abiding in Him by faith. But he grievously dishonors Christ, who, being fully persuaded of His divine Master's call to labour in the word, not for a sect, but for, and in, "the one body," refrains from the work for lack of humanly devised ordination or "recognition;" as he would equally dishonor and "quench the Spirit," if, unable to trust God, he yielded to the popular notion, and accepted the charge of *the* pastor to a particular congregation, at the call of man, as the nominee of trustees, or a rich landlord; or, what is worse, as the successful candidate, after a trial sermon, of a popular election, or by the votes of a brawling vestry. Happy the man, happy the assembly of christians, who hear and obey the voice of Jesus; thankfully own His gifts, in one or more, submitting to the present guiding of the ever-present, indwelling, over-ruling Spirit; as the Israelitish camp followed the guiding of the ever-present cloud which covered the tent of the congregation, after that Moses had "finished the work" (significant type, indeed!) which God had commanded him to do (Compare Ex. xl, 33—38, with Acts ii, 33). Better never to have read the

Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles to the Churches, than, having read them, to make the word of God of none effect by our traditions; and, like an adulterous woman, to wipe the mouth, and say, "I have done no wickedness."

TO LAYMEN, SO CALLED.

To you, my brethren in Christ, who are not of the *clerical* order, according to man, though you are so, according to God; for you are the *kleros* of Scripture, that is, you are the Lord's lot, or heritage, (*kleros* being the word from which *clergy* is taken, yet used by the Holy Ghost to designate the flock, not the shepherds, 1 Pet. v, 3); but "the clergy," not content with usurping the "priesthood" and "the church" to themselves (for to go "into the Church" is synonymous, in clerical language, with "taking orders"), have, in assuming exclusively the designation of "the clergy," adopted the apostate principle of Rome; to you, then, my brethren, who are the *Lord's* clergy or heritage, would I address a word. You may be, you ought to be, ashamed of this sin of your teachers, and I have often seen many of you smile at their assumption, and have heard you express your thankfulness that *you* had not to subscribe with a pretended *ex-animo* thereto; but do not think that therefore you are acquitted; nay, my brethren, you are verily guilty; for I am morally certain that if, with one voice, you were, in a decided, solemn tone, to denounce the sin, your God-fearing pastors could not persevere; for *they know it to be sin* as well as you. I believe that, for very shame, they would "cease to do evil and learn to do well;" and in so doing, O what spiritual power would be theirs, what a triumph over the

devil would it be, and what cause of thankfulness would you feel it to be, that, through your decided out-spoken protest, you were the means of snapping this strong link which still binds so called Protestant churches to the wheels of Popery. But if through false expediency, mistrust of God, and the fear of man, you persevere in upholding and cloaking the evil, their sin is yours, and you help to bind them to that terrible subscription to those stereotyped figments which I have brought under your notice; figments requiring (as an old clergymen now living has said concerning sponsorial stipulations) “*persevering ingenuity in devising new and subtle explanations and justifications of them.*” O brethren, is it God that calls upon His servants to devise subtle justifications of known evil, in order that good may come? With one breath you protest against Popery, and with the next the very spirit of Ignatius Loyola dictates to you the arguments you urge for continuing in evil that good may come. “Consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds” (Judges xix, 30).

P.S.—Failure enough there has been, and will be, where, in the endeavour to maintain a good conscience (*i.e.*, a conscience subject to and regulated by the revealed will of God), simple scriptural ways are enforced. Let us not cloak the evil. Certain it is that the very holiness of the truth confessed necessarily leads to an exposure of evil, which, under other circumstances, would not be manifested. Christians have been scandalized by the misconduct of those who have stood for the truth; they have

been shocked, and deservedly so, at the petty quarrels for supremacy by strong, yet little minds; and this they make an excuse for their continued disobedience, while other sectarian leaders and teachers take advantage of it to screen themselves and keep their followers. But, notwithstanding the glaring ebullitions of the flesh, the truth remains the same, and equally authoritative over conscience, whosoever it be that abuses it. How has the glorious gospel of the blessed God fared often at the hands of timid men, who have thought to guard it from abuse by concealing its freeness? Shall we act like them, and because we have ourselves, many of us, shewn that the testimony which God hath given us (I mean not thereby anything special, anything that is not to be found by all who have the heart to seek it) was too holy for our unholy hearts holily to exhibit; shall we, I say, on this account, conceal it and give it up? Nay; the very light which discovers and reproves our ways is the only light to guide us through "the encircling gloom." "Yet a little while, and He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry." Let us be found waiting for the Son from heaven, not knowingly holding to aught that the breath of the Lord will consume; nor, with mistaken charity, close our mouths through fear of disturbing the false peace which may reign where an evangelical clergyman is hiding the light from his parishioners by the very position which he holds *between them and God*. I declare how painful it is to speak thus. I know well how zealously many of them labour in the gospel; but the very position which they hold has been obtained through a professedly *unfeigned* assent and consent to that which, in principle, is an apostacy from the true standing

of the Church of God; and, by its sacerdotal caste between man and God, denies the finished work of Jesus, and the sole and all-sufficient efficacy of His priestly function for men in things pertaining to God. I have been speaking of principles. I should be ashamed to adduce the worldliness of this professed teacher, or the positive unsoundness in the faith of another, as though these were legitimate arguments against the principles of any ecclesiastical system. No; party spirit, personal unholiness, biting and devouring, unsoundness in the faith, are evils which were as rife in apostles' days as now. When *principles* are in question, a professing church must be tried by its principles, and its principles themselves by the word of God. The fact that evil was occurrent, and proceeded so far at Ephesus, that at length the candlestick was removed out of its place, and that all the seven Churches are no more, is no proof that the fundamental principles of those Churches were unsound. Who could dare to say so? One learns, however, this solemn lesson, that principles themselves, however true, are no preservative against apostacy. Personal attachment to Christ Himself, evidenced, not by well-meaning intentions, but by obedience to His word, is that which alone will preserve the purged conscience from becoming seared and blunted. It is very easy for that which begins in true testimony for Christ, and against known evil, to sink into the narrowest sectarianism; and so, through the glaring failure of those who have stood for the truth, the principle itself, which remains true and unharmed, because it is of God, will be exposed to the charge of being unsound; whereas in systems of human contrivance and state support, the whole mass might possibly

sink so low as not to have one single living soul in it, as in the damning heresy of Socinianism, and still, like apostate Rome, maintain its continuance, its visible form and structure. The argument in favour of any system that, however low it may sink, it has saving truth in its creeds and articles, and that a witness for the truth is thus constantly maintained in the darkest days, is an argument which they who stand for "God and the word of His grace" may, at any rate, surely claim for the Bible.

Let then our conduct be judged by the truth, not the truth by our conduct. Solemn invitation to make, when one reflects that it is one which many have made before, who, when troubles arose, have either shifted their ground, or gone back, some to the world, some to the national establishment, some, who had too much light and conscience for that, to a path where they could indulge their cynical propensities, and enunciate theories which they had no purpose of testing the truth of by putting them in practice; while they exhort others to abide by the evil they themselves have as yet too much conscience left to return to. In these days, when God's gracious hand is stretched out, and multitudes are being brought to Christ, let the evangelist, whose mouth the Lord has opened, go forward, and not slack his hand, remembering that the essential thing for the unconverted man is that he should believe the gospel; but *when saved*, it is essential for him that he should be taught how to behave himself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, and not be allowed to suppose that it is a matter of indifference whether he walks according to the word or counter to it.

I fear that through strong attachment to the

existing state of things, and a love for (false) peace at any price, there is little hope of an honest heart-return and subjection to the written word; and that the few who, through evil report (much, very much of which they justly deserve) and good report insist thereon, will be charged with "Plymouth Brethrenism." If to maintain the divine principle, that "God and the word of His grace" must be supreme in the conscience, exposes one to such a charge, let us bear it, yet seek more and more, *by practical obedience to the word of God*, to disprove the charge, for any *ism* is heresy. Pursuing the light one could not but step beyond the pale of the national establishment and all other sects, and find oneself consorting with those who had been led into the same path of simple obedience to God; but a brotherhood limited by anything short of the large embrace of Christ, or a testimony that is careless for the honour of His name, who is Jehovah's Fellow, either by exhibiting indifferentism to the purity and holiness of truth, or by excluding them that are Christ's, is to be repudiated. "God and the word of His grace" is the sufficiency of those who *trust* Him. If we talk of trusting Him, and yet insist on the dogma, written or unwritten, of self-willed men, God is dishonored, and the truth we insist on becomes a witness against ourselves. Solemn, solemn words! Are we really willing to come to the light, that our deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God? (John iii, 21.)



APPENDIX.—ON APOSTASY.

We are so accustomed, when speaking of apostasy, to travel, in the self-complacency of our hearts, to the blasphemies of Popery, that we think it impossible it can apply to orthodox christians who protest against the Papacy. But if apostasy, (*αποστασις*,) be a standing away from, a departure from, a defection, then it will be seen that it describes the condition in which the Church, as a whole, is involved. In the measure, and in the particular thing, in which we cease to depend upon the Lord, the living God, there is *apostasis*, i.e., defection from God. Chillingworth, a great reformer, when contending against Rome, in answer to the charge of schism brought against the Protestants, said—(I quote from a little tract, called, ‘Mark them which cause Divisions’)—“The imputation of schism lies heavily upon you, for making our separation from you necessary and just, by requiring unnecessary and unlawful conditions of your communion.” Now, that the Protestant societies, called churches, whether national or dissenting, are formed on the very principle condemned by the reformer, will, I think, be allowed by all who accept the testimony of Dr. McNiele, in his popular work, the “Church and the Churches,” 1st edition, pp. 126, 127. Therein he states what, in his opinion, is the condition of all visible churches, including his own, viz., that they are “unities which maintain themselves by rejecting all who will not conform to their secondary specialities;” and that “it is the characteristic littleness of visible churches to exclude all who follow not with us, although they may be devoutly honoring the name, and sincerely rejoicing in the truth and love of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ.” And further, that, “for

the sake of details of human origin, and of, at least, questionable wisdom, we are involved (he says) in a continued violation towards many christians of that loving forbearance which is indeed of divine appointment." (Page 93.) This condition of things, pourtrayed by a skilful hand, is, I believe, a true testimony, and what I venture to call "apostasy," i.e., defection from that which is of "divine appointment;" and that all who cling to these excluding societies are necessarily involved in sectarianism, and in the exaltation of the traditions of men to a level with the word of God; yea, to a supremacy over that word; and are thus pandering to that idol of a disloyal heart—false expediency.

"AND NOW, BRETHREN, I COMMEND YOU TO GOD, AND TO THE WORD OF HIS GRACE, WHICH IS ABLE TO BUILD YOU UP, AND TO GIVE YOU AN INHERITANCE AMONG ALL THEM THAT ARE SANCTIFIED."—Acts xx, 32.

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