

A WORD ON PRINCIPLES.

It is a blessed thing that we can always count on our Lord's faithfulness to His people, and on His watchful care and tender love for them, no matter how evil and difficult the days may be. He has given us, and He maintains before us, Divine principles and truth on which we are to act, and on which He will be with us in sympathy and power. The foremost of these are, our nothingness and His sufficiency, our emptiness and His fulness, our feebleness and His power, whilst, over all, we have His holy Spirit to make good to us all that He is, to take of the things of Christ and show them to us. We can trace this Divine principle all through Scripture, though, in Old Testament times, man under probation did not learn the lesson nor the blessedness of dependence upon Him—being unsubject, "rebellious from the day that I knew you" as Moses said. Still, what characterises the Christian, under the light of New Testament truth, is the acceptance, to start with, of these Divine principles, fully made good to him on the ground of the grace that has shown him what he was as a child of Adam, and what he now is as a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus. These Divine principles always apply.

And never was there a time when it was more important than the present, to be clear as to the Divine principles God has preserved to His people, and the Divine basis upon which all truth rests; for surely none of His people can fail to see how, in the present day, all that is of God is called in question, and all that has Christ and His glory for its object is ignored, if not actually derided. But beyond this, every true soul

must be conscious of the drive that is going on amongst the people of God everywhere, and of the pressure that is brought to bear upon them in every quarter. And here I do not refer merely to the systems of men, and what may be seen of the organizing power of the enemy as shewn from Romanism downwards—that most pretentious form, where the unity of the Church is the great basis of argument, and where all without the pale of their communion are looked upon as damned—but to his power over individual souls, setting the mind to work, and introducing enquiries touching the Personality of our Lord, enquiries which lead to irreverent remarks concerning Him, which the makers thereof do not themselves perceive to be irreverent; and then in producing difference of judgment as to the meaning and bearing of these enquiries, shewing indifferentism on the one hand, and on the other the acceptance of the opinion of others who declare they see no harm in what is being taught—conscience and feeling for our Lord being thus handed over to the control of others, and on such a subject too as His Person, and name, and glory. All this shows clearly enough the power at work—the hand of the enemy of Him who came to bind the strong man and to spoil his goods. One need but look around to see the fruit of his efforts, his wiles on every hand in Christendom; scarcely a book on any religious subject can be opened without finding the varied forms of his success in mixing up error with the truth, so as to depreciate the value and to detract from the power, as far as he can, of what God has accomplished in spite of man, and of the blessed and eternal victory our Lord has won.

Certain it is, however, that no opinion of any person or of any number of persons, let them be ever so spiritual or pious, can satisfy a conscience that is exercised by God, or a heart that feels where the glory of its dearest Object is touched. Each believer

has to do directly with God, with our Lord, and with the Spirit acting directly upon the conscience by the Word; gifts indeed there are, and helps too, but any gift or any help that comes between the soul and God is a positive hindrance. God intends all that He ministers through *any* channel to be received by each one directly from Himself and with Himself. Where this is not the case practically, the truth presented has neither power nor weight with the soul, the conscience not being exercised with God in regard to it, and what passes for truth (and Satan always seeks to imitate truth, in order to introduce error) will thus be imbibed, and its evil effects seen in strife and scattering, because it is insisted upon as truth, and those who see its falsity and its error are held up to scorn for refusing it, and every bad motive is attributed to them if they seek to expose it. The cry is raised that 'The unity is attacked,' 'The unity is in danger,' and souls are distressed and misled, forgetting that true unity rests on quite another basis, and flows from a totally different source—that which is hidden and secret, that which subsists between Himself and His people, and between His people themselves in consequence—the unity of that Spirit that always and invariably has Christ and His glory for its object.

It is this hidden unity which is always in danger, and which is ever the object of the enemy's attack. It may be urged, perhaps, that Satan knows nothing of this unity, and this may be granted; but he knows well enough when a company of God's redeemed are occupied with their Lord and His glory, and are thus seeking to be for Him in the enemy's land. And this would apply equally to each individual believer, no matter how feeble, or howsoever deeply tried. Satan most assuredly does not know what communion with our Lord is, but he knows full well, from the testimony borne, whether any believer, or any company of believers, is in such communion or not; and his

object ever is, to draw all such out of it, and to prevent others getting into it. And, in saying this, I do not speak of communion as a high or advanced state, into which souls may be seeking to get, but of the measure of communion each may have—even the very feeblest believer—in occupation with Him, and Him alone, His glory, His perfections, His love and His grace, His mind and His will.

That outward unity may take the prominent place before the soul, no one can deny; we are surrounded by proofs of it. But it is not of God that it should be so; His word is, “Using diligence to keep the unity of *the Spirit*” (not of *the Body*). “in the uniting bond of peace”—the unseen, not the seen thing. The display of outward unity is what Satan is ever seeking after; as one, now with the Lord, so truly said: ‘The principle of unity is *now* Satan’s power; what *was* the power of unity then, in first gathering the Church, is that of scattering now.’ It is well, too, to bear in mind that, union by concord and agreement has never yet been the instrument of power on the side of good, and indeed it becomes unity in evil, not in separation from it—for concord and agreement rise no higher than man, and leave out God and the Holy Spirit.

Again, as to another Divine principle, specially recovered by our Lord to His scattered and distressed people, nearly sixty years ago—‘Separation from evil, God’s principle of unity.’ This principle, coming as light in the midst of darkness, was, through grace, acted upon thankfully, at first by a few, then more generally; and in the measure in which it was carried out in simple obedience and dependence, the Lord gave both individual and collective blessing—communion of heart and Spirit in occupation with Himself, and in separation from that which was dishonouring to Him. Those who sought to carry this principle into practice were always comparatively few, and found themselves opposed, derided and despised, especially by those who, while

professing to know the Lord Jesus as their Saviour, and to own Him as their Lord, shrank from entire separation, and, saying that the ground was too narrow, asserted a broader principle, and one more calculated to suit the natural taste and mind of man. Thus the path for those who sought to act on the true principle, from never being popular, became more and more difficult and trying; still the Lord's approval, the knowledge of His favour, and the sense of obedience to His will, and the realization of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, more than compensated for all the distress and contempt, and the Lord blessed largely and numbers were added. Testings arose—testings that called into practice the principle professed; and certain it is that every test that was permitted to come upon His people reduced their numbers—still the principle remained ever the same, and there was the same blessing and joy for those who acted upon it, and so it will be, thank God, to the very last.

But now a different principle has been evolved—not new, for it is precisely the same in spirit though differing in form, as was shewn at the first by the opposers to the Divine principle—it is the principle of estimating the amount and character of evil, and deciding whether it is sufficiently great to call for separation from it. The spirit of obedience is here lost, and the judgment of man is set up in its stead—the corrupt judgment of man, swayed by his tastes, inclinations, and natural wishes and ties, asserting itself to decide what amount of evil makes separation permissible (I do not say 'necessary,' for the ground taken is too low for that). This, of necessity produces division—those who seek to act as heretofore on the Divine precept of separation from evil, and those who take the ground that evil must be sufficiently gross and pronounced to warrant separation from it; the latter declaring the former to be guilty of schism, and causers of division. Evidently the grounds of these two

actions are opposed to each other. I need only cite 2 Cor. vi., 17, 18, to show which is according to Scripture, and to the fact that "It is commonly reported" was sufficient evidence upon which to write the Apostolic command to "put away from among yourselves that wicked person." True, we do not live in Apostolic days now; but we may well ask what would have been the consequence, if the reply from Corinth had been, "We will enquire as to the extent of the evil you write to us about, but we must ask you first to be good enough to state the evidence on which you assume the existence of evil amongst us?" Or if, as one has said "I do not believe what is laid to Mr. —'s charge; if I did, I would not go on another moment with him;" or as another has said "Mr. —'s teaching is very bad, and his doctrine is shocking, but division is worse."

Such statements as these are but rebellion against the command, and a setting up of one's own capacity to judge and to decide how much evil can be tolerated without separation; obedience is lost, and even the spirit of obedience cast aside—let us hope it is but for a time, and that, if our Lord permit us to remain here a little longer for Him, there may be recovery, and a reseeking the true ground of unity, even though driven to it by the bitter fruit of departure from it. This departure has not been as recent as some would suppose; the spirit of it has, alas! been working for some years past, and questions have been raised which showed where the mind was at work, and the conscience unexercised. I refer to discussions as to how far a believer could be said to be dead with Christ, whether actually, morally, or merely judicially—forgetting the blessed word which says "Ye are dead," "Reckon yourselves indeed to be dead," "Crucified with Him," and "Buried with Him." This was followed by the assertion that 2 Cor. iv., 7—13, applied only to the Apostles of that day, and has no direct application to

the believer now. Many tacitly receiving this, if not actually accepting it, the next question raised was as to Eternal Life, and further departure was seen, questions being raised as to who were in possession of it, or "in it," and when, and how it was received, and was it Christ, and was He it, and when, and how, and where? Some becoming alarmed, and endeavouring to stand against this, every effort was made to explain away what was shewn to be wrong, and even to deny what had been written and printed, in order to maintain outward unity, forgetting that any so-called unity without separating from evil was not true unity in His sight, and could not but be displeasing to Him! We need only refer to the notices issued from Croydon in Sept., and London, on the 13th Oct. ; and Bristol, on 19th Oct., and Dublin, on Nov. 30th last, all of which plainly show the departure from the true ground, and the adoption of a new and unscriptural basis for keeping together.

The first of these notices (page 22) states that "charges "of heresy and blasphemy . . . have been brought, "but *never proved* against a servant of the Lord." It goes on to say, "We have failed to find blasphemy, "heresy, or false doctrine in the teaching assailed, or "anything contrary to the word of God." The notice then says they at Croydon decided to receive a letter of commendation from Greenwich. It is to be noted that no mention whatever is made of Bexhill Assembly, which about three months previously had refused such a letter. However, it is then added as a sort of saving clause, to calm some who no doubt were still distressed, and to keep them outwardly together, that "Brethren "in Croydon were not thereby necessarily pledged to "accept all Mr. Raven had said or done." Where in all this, is the unity of the Spirit, or the slightest effort to maintain it? It is simply saying they are decided to go on with Greenwich and Mr. Raven, though not pledged thereby to accept all he has said or done, although they had said before there was nothing

in the teaching contrary to the Word of God! What it is he has said and done is left vague enough—each one may define it to suit himself. The principle, or we may say the lack of it, is what is sadly manifest—it is the spirit of Bethesda—an undefined something they decline to be pledged to accept (because some are troubled at the teaching), but at the same time determination to go on with the teacher and doer of it. First they declare there is nothing contrary to the Word of God in the teaching, and then they say they do not accept all the teacher has said and done! Here it is evident that a basis of outward unity is set forth, which flatly contradicts 2 Cor. vi., 17, 18, both in letter and spirit.

It is then added that they “are not gathered to any particular set of doctrines, no matter how true they “may be”—this is wide enough and vague enough to suit the loosest in principle; indeed, those in Bethesda would, one may hope, repudiate such uncertain ground. But mark what follows; “Nor do we mean (by God’s “grace) to tolerate dishonour to the Person of our Lord.” It is then said; “By doing either we should be off the “ground of the Church of God.” Do these dear brethren consider it no dishonour to the Person of our Lord to say, speaking of Eternal life, “It was ever an integral part of the person the eternal Son”; and that “Talking about Christ manifesting to the unbelieving world eternal life—the blessedness in which as Man, He was with the Father—is to my mind not only erroneous but repulsive”; and that “It is a monstrosity to say that Christ never ceased to be the exhibition of eternal life from a Babe in the manger to the throne of the Father”; and that “In the Epistle of John, the Apostle, as I understand it does not set forth the person of the Son, but announces *something* which came to light and is now perfectly expressed in Him”; and that “Scripture does not *speak* of Christ as having been the eternal

life which was with the Father before the world was," etc., etc.?

The notice concludes, after accusing those who separate from this evil with schism, with the belief "that if there had been true brotherly confidence and "waiting on God, the difficulties might have been "removed, the truth clearly unfolded to the edification "of the saints, and thereby this terrible dishonour to "the Lord's name in the scattering of His people, "prevented." What "brotherly confidence" of any kind could there be between the defamer of our Lord and those who were distressed by his statements? Statements, mark, which he does not feel to be, in the least degree, defaming or wrong; the Croydon brethren only speak indeed of removable difficulties in the way of a clear unfolding of the truth for the edification of the saints. Besides Mr. Raven was besought by many to give up these views, and to withdraw his statements, and invariably refused. I have now before me an original letter of his, concluding with "I am a little weary of strife—but think that too much is at stake to allow of drawing back;" this was as far back as February, 1889—the efforts made since to induce him to retract, are too numerous to mention. And indeed why should he retract anything, for the Greenwich meeting, when their attention was drawn to his teaching, declare they have "the fullest confidence" in him? And thus he withdraws nothing at all.

But those who see in what is taught, mere removable difficulties, to the clear unfolding of the truth "to the edification of the saints," are not likely to see that separation from the evil teachings and unholy surmisings is more to the Lord's honour than going on with them, and is indeed incumbent upon all who call upon His Holy Name. It is not the objecting to the evil, and the separation from it that has caused the scattering, but the persistence in teaching what is evil, and alas! its acceptance by so many, that has scattered

the Lord's people. The evil itself no doubt has scattered, but it is by means of the unholy spirit of indifference to it. Had they but judged and dealt with the evil, there would have been no scattering at all. An admission, however, is made "that certain expressions that have troubled many have been withdrawn and condemned by their authors?" The condemned expressions are not given even vaguely; but unless they are pointed out, who can tell what they are, and what it is that is condemned. Evidently something wrong is taught, and many are troubled by it; but the value of any withdrawal and condemnation lies in its definiteness, its publicity and thoroughness.

In the London notice of Oct. 13th, 1890 (page), it is first stated that "statements reported to have been made dishonouring to the Person of our blessed Lord" had been circulated amongst us, and that the meetings were purposed "in order to give expression to our united repudiation and abhorrence of such Christ-dishonouring statements." In the next paragraph it is said, "Whilst not admitting the truth of *all* the charges recently published on the testimony of one witness the brothers with one heart and mind repudiated and utterly condemned certain statements dishonouring to the Lord, which it is admitted *have* been made amongst those gathered together to His name." We can indeed thank God for such a plain and distinct assertion; but, where is the action that should correspond with it? Where are those now whose statements were felt to be so dishonouring to the Lord as to call for repudiation and utter condemnation? Are those who made the statements and those who condemn them still breaking bread together—still going through the outward form of unity? And what are these statements? Surely simple uprightness before God would lead to their being as openly repudiated as they were openly made, *i.e.*, if the condemnation of them is accepted by the makers of them, and is real on

the part of those who profess to condemn them. And if it is not accepted, and they are not separated from, what is the value of this alleged repudiation? It is mere delusion, a solemn mockery—a profane pretence to refuse what is “Christ dishonouring,” whilst still going on with those who dishonour Him.

The writers of this paper pronounce their own condemnation. They profess “unabated confidence in the power of the Lord in the midst by His Spirit to deal with the evil in those Assemblies where such evil may be taught or propagated.” And yet when it comes to be tested by facts, this dealing with the evil goes no further than words. Where is the dealing with the evil at Greenwich, and at Plaistow, and at Ventnor, and at Lincoln—to go no further for examples? Has any Assembly action of any kind taken place at Ventnor regarding Mr. Cross’s letter? It may be said he has withdrawn it; I re-print his so-called withdrawal (see pages 26, 27). It cannot be said that he here withdraws one letter of the doctrine or statements he made. He withdraws it “from print,” and expresses “unfeigned sorrow for having written it,” and “withdraws it as far as is in” his “power,” and this because “grave objections regarding some statements” have “been pointed out” to him! Judgment of the thoughts themselves, that could deliberately argue that in John i. “He” (our Lord) “is there the only begotten of the Father, not born of a woman, nor so begettable”—“He was born into the life to which He died, a thing true of Him as of any other man”—“A babe in the manger could in no wise express what He was as ‘the only begotten’ with the Father, one with Him from before all worlds in undefined fulness and infinite perfection of unclouded communion. A babe has not such communion.” Judgment of these thoughts, and of the source from which they come, is wholly wanting in the so-called withdrawal. And we are bound to ask: What has Ventnor done with reference to them? Has

it accepted this alleged withdrawal, and publicly notified it, declaring the Lord's name cleared and His honour satisfied with it, or has it refused to accept it and dealt with the writer of the letter? Is it aware that three months after issuing this so-called withdrawal, the writer said to a brother that he would be thankful if anyone would shew him anything in his letter that was unscriptural?

It is said that at Plaistow the one who said our Lord had to return to communion with His Father after conversing with the woman in John iv. has to be silent for the time being in the meetings, he explaining that he meant "returned to the joy of communion," or "communing." And supposing he has "withdrawn" the whole thing, is imposing silence a Scriptural or adequate notice to take of such a statement? Can a company that deals thus triflingly with the holiest and most wondrous thing ever manifested on earth—our Lord's communion with the Father, be owned as an assembly gathered to His blessed name? And has Lincoln dealt with the one who said that one touching our Lord's hand when He was on earth would only have touched a human hand of flesh? And what has Greenwich done but justify Mr. Raven fully in all he has said and done, declaring itself to have the fullest confidence in him? It is idle, nay it is untruthful, to talk of confidence in the power of the Lord by His Spirit to deal with evil in assemblies where only verbal notice is taken of the evil, or where the teacher of the evil is defended, and declared to have the assembly's "fullest confidence." How then too about Croydon's saving clause, that they are not pledged to accept all Mr. Raven has said, etc.? Scripture knows nothing of repudiation or condemnation of evil that is not either put out or separated from unless the evil speakers or doers confess and fully judge their words and acts, and the source from which these came. Neither of these courses has been taken by the writers

of these notices; on the contrary, the first Assembly that put into practice the principle owned to in the London notice, and which the Croydon brothers say they "should be off the ground of the Church of God" if they did not act upon, has been ignored by these notices, and those who follow that judgment are accused of schism, &c., one printed paper speaking of Bexhill Assembly as "a small out of the way little gathering calling in question the status of Greenwich."

The first signer, of the London notice accuses all who separate from the evil as "*seceders from the Lord's table,*" but this is begging the question, for a table that is connected with evil persistently, in spite of all remonstrance, is not the Lord's table at all. There have been no seceders from the Lord's table, in all this sorrow and trial, but those who, following Mr. Raven and his evil notions, have left the true ground of gathering, viz. separation from evil, and who denounce Bexhill for acting on the Divine principle, whilst they themselves applaud Greenwich for ignoring it as to the evil teaching concerning the Lord's Person, and for putting away as a liar and slanderer one who objected to that teaching. Energy—pursuit of the one who raised his voice against the evil teaching, and who withdrew from the teacher; blindness—refusal to deal with the defamer of our Lord, and determination to support him as enjoying their fullest confidence!

If anything further were needed to confirm the justice of refusing Greenwich, here it is. It asserts itself as an Assembly, and decides what it considers evil and what not, what it will judge and what it will go on with; and, in result, it maintains the defamer of our Lord and his evil teachings in its midst, and puts away as a wicked person one who had protested against and withdrawn from them on that account. And the upholder of this writes of those who separate from this evil as under "a delusion of the devil" and as "sowing the seeds of delusion"

through overweening confidence in their own views, and uncharitable distrust of their brethren"! He adds "Better to be still with two or three cleaving to Christ, than going with the multitude to do evil." Most assuredly true—but can Christ and His defamer go on together? To cleave to Him we must leave His defamer, and this is all we have sought to do; the multitude is the other way, those who, deceived by specious explanations, go on with the evil. And he concludes with: "Let us be alive to the fact that the question raised by the course of the leaders who have gone out from amongst us is: Has God given up brethren, and are they the new witnesses who are to take the place of those whom God has set aside?" Many no doubt find this a stumbling block, and, in order to avoid it, stay with the evil. But it is a wholly false issue, and no fact at all. The question really is: Will you go on with evil for the sake of an outward unity, or will you for Christ's sake stand apart from it to be with Him? Do not be deluded, dear brethren, by the accusation that we, who refuse to walk in fellowship with defamation of our Lord, are seeking to take the place vacated by others who have been and still are unfaithful; let it suffice us that we are content to be nothing but a few feeble souls cleaving to our Lord, and seeking to act in obedience to His word, and to put into practice His precepts; content through His grace rather to be defamed ourselves than that any defamation by those we are associated with should rest or even appear to rest upon Him.

But to return to the London notice, it goes on to say that "the fullest confidence was expressed in the faithfulness of God, and in the continued presence of the Lord with the twos or threes gathered together to His name, and that by His grace and power, all unscriptural statements savouring of irreverence, speculation or levity on such a holy subject, *if not already judged and withdrawn with true confession* by the

“authors will be dealt with in a scriptural way by the “local gatherings responsible” etc. There can be little doubt of the constitution and character of this meeting of “Brothers (about 500 in number).” It was not an Assembly meeting, but a meeting convened to calm those whose consciences were troubled by Christ-dishonouring statements, with a profession of confidence in God that they would be judged eventually, if not already judged and withdrawn with true confession by the authors. Can one single such statement be said to have been really judged as yet, and withdrawn with any confession at all that can be called true or adequate; if so, what is the statement? If it cannot be publicly pointed out, what is such an assertion worth? Indeed it is because nothing will be judged or withdrawn at all, and that discipline is refused to be exercised towards those who have made these statements, that the separation in the form it has taken has been forced upon us. And even now they only see division in it, and deny that there is any evil to separate from.

They then condemn the printing and publishing of evil statements without first having brought them home to their authors and sought their restoration. But what more bringing home of their evil statements to their authors can be needed when they put them forth repeatedly by word of mouth, by letters, and even in print? It is all of a piece with the spirit of the whole movement—a resenting of the bringing to light what they themselves see no evil in, but what they are willing to admit is dishonouring to the Lord, and to be repudiated and condemned when it is made public, simply because some of their party (thank God) are distressed at it.

But we may note that being gathered to the Lord’s name, and His presence in the midst, necessitates separation, actually and practically from evil, and that there is no such thing as being gathered to His name without it. I will give what is open to all, a quotation from the paper on “Separation from evil” before referred

to. Its application to the present system of ecclesiastical tyranny will be manifest to any who have eyes to see and ears to hear. “ There is a constant tendency in the “ mind to fall into sectarianism, and to make a basis and “ opinion of the opposite of what I have here just alluded “ to, that is, of a system of some kind or other to which “ the mind is attached, and round which saints or others “ are gathered, and which, assuming itself to be based “ on a true principle of unity, regards as schism whatever “ separates from itself—attaching the name of unity to “ what is not *God’s* centre and plan of unity. Wherever “ this is the case, it will be found that the doctrine of “ unity becomes a sanction for some kind of moral evil, “ for something contrary to the Word of God ; and the “ authority of God Himself, which is attached to the “ idea of unity, becomes, through the instrumentality “ of this latter thought, a means of engaging the saints “ to continue in evil. Moreover, continuance in this “ evil is enforced by all the difficulty which unbelief “ finds to separate from that in which it is settled, and “ where the natural heart finds its ties, and, generally, “ temporal interests the sphere of their support.”

The Bristol notice (page 24) appeared in the same week as that of Park Street, London, the latter on Oct. 13th, and the former on Oct. 19th. The Bristol notice declares that there is no proof in support of the charges brought against the “ brother at Thornton House, Greenwich ” (Mr. Raven), and then goes on to assert that “ the present confusion is, in great “ part, the result of the abandonment of Divine “ principles on the part of those who first made these “ accusations,” because they did not go to Greenwich and prefer them “ with supporting evidence.” These dear brethren appear to be ignorant of the responsibility of a local Assembly, that is professedly gathered to our Lord’s Name. It is for the Assembly, locally, to perceive and to deal with the evil in its midst, and were it necessary for any to go to the local Assembly

and prove it, the very *status* of the local company as an Assembly would be questioned. Leviticus xiv., 35 says, "He that owneth the house shall come and tell the priest, saying, It seemeth to me as it were a plague in the house." It was because Greenwich failed to do this that Bexhill Assembly was forced to call attention to it, and to protest against infection from the leprosy, and to close the door. The Bristol notice then whilst condemning what they term the "ignoring this," Greenwich, "Assembly"—a leprous company—theyself deliberately ignore the Bexhill Assembly for endeavouring to prevent the contagion. Moreover, the Apostle did not go, nor send witnesses to Corinth, when the evil was in the Assembly there, nor did he furnish or suggest any evidence whatever with regard to it. He merely stated "It is commonly reported" etc., and "Wherefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." No name even was given; the Assembly was left to find out, and to clear itself before the Lord, of the case of evil in its midst. The Bristol notice then "regrets and deploras that there have been in some quarters discussions as to our Lord's blessed Person which have resulted in expressions dishonouring to Him." It does not specify the expressions used, nor the quarters whence they came, and advisedly so, for the persons who have used these expressions are still in fellowship with the signers of this notice; one of them indeed, although admonished by them as a heretic (Tit. iii. 10), is still with them and has always been so.

The Dublin (40, Westland Row) notice (page 25) furnishes a still more striking example of where determination to keep together, and to maintain outward unity leads. First the notice acquits Mr. Raven of the "charges of blasphemy, heresy, and of teaching doctrine subversive of Christianity," and those who separate from him are condemned for division "without Scripture warrant." Then the

notice condemns him for "the one-sided defective and unguarded manner in which he has presented the truths he desired to unfold." What these are is not stated—they are said to be "truths," and the only error lies in his manner of presenting them. This is so serious as to require that the signers' condemnation should be placed on record! One may well stop and ask how anyone in his soul with God could in unfolding "truths" fall into a manner that needs to be so thoroughly condemned. The notice then condemns "the irreverent form (however unintentional) of his statement relative to the infancy of our blessed Lord," and considers "that our brother should cease to minister until confidence be restored." It then desires "to express our utter abhorrence of the attempts of some to divide the life of the Lord Jesus, whom "no man knoweth," leading to the unholy expressions which have been uttered, though thankful, that, so far as we know, these expressions have been judged and withdrawn." Here again "the attempt to divide the life of the Lord Jesus," and "the unholy expressions" were made by those with whom these dear brethren still remain in communion, sheltering themselves behind "been judged and withdrawn, *so far as we know.*" The principle of separation from evil is virtually abandoned, and the maintenance of outward unity all that is sought for. And we may well ask how do they know that "the irreverent form of his statement relative to the infancy of our blessed Lord," was unintentional? Has the maker of it ever confessed to such irreverence, and pleaded that he was unintentionally betrayed into it? And how comes it that a teacher in desiring to unfold "truths," should fall into irreverence, and regarding such a subject too—the Person of our blessed Lord? It is so grave (and this indeed is but too true) that they consider he "should cease to minister until confidence be restored." Then, we must presume he has not confessed and pleaded

“unintentional” falling into it; and if not how can they honestly go on with him? Evidently they have no confidence in him—will silence in the meetings restore it? And where is Scripture for this course? And is he silent in the meetings, and has he ceased to “minister”? I think I am right in saying, he has not.

But let us sum up the result of these notices, and see where they land the writers of them. The Croydon brethren state that the separation from Mr. Raven’s teachings has hindered the clear unfolding of the truth to the edification of the saints; evidently referring to Mr. Raven’s teaching.

The Dublin brethren condemn Mr. Raven for “unintentional” irreverence relative to the infancy of our blessed Lord, and consider he should cease to minister until confidence be restored.

The Greenwich brethren say Mr. Raven is “a brother in whom the meeting has the fullest confidence,” and see nothing whatever about which to call him in question.

The Bristol brethren say “there is no proof” against him.

The London (Park Street) brethren “repudiate and utterly condemn certain statements dishonouring to the Lord, which it is admitted have been made amongst those gathered together to His name;” but from beginning to end they do not mention Mr. Raven’s name; he being present and taking part in their meeting, they could not well do so.

And this is the result of seeking to maintain outward unity—“to keep the sheep together, and to preserve the testimony”! Where, it may be asked, is God in it all? Where the seeking to maintain the unity of the Spirit? It is idle to speak here of communion or fellowship “in the light as He is in the light.” No two notices agree save in determination to keep together, and to maintain the teacher, let him teach what he will. Honest dealing with evil there is not. One company

sees nothing to question in him ; another considers the teaching as “ the truth ” to be “ clearly unfolded to the “ edification of the saints,” and the same as “ distinctly “ taught in the writings of our late dear brother “ Mr. Darby ;” another holds the teacher guilty of “ unintentional ” irreverence as to our Lord’s Person, and that he ought not to minister until confidence is restored ; another says “ there is no proof,” and condemns those who separate from the evil as “ ignoring “ an Assembly ”—which indeed they do not do, but they refuse to own it as an Assembly of God on account of its persistent and wilful complicity with evil teaching ; and others again (those at Clevedon who follow Mr. Raven) see “ No Scripture for the “ rejection of one assembly by another,” and say they “ cannot admit the Lord has given His authority for “ such action,” declaring “ the action by Bexhill ” to be “ an unscriptural action as affecting Greenwich,” and that “ Bexhill’s statement of the existence ” of evil “ at Greenwich ” is not to be accepted “ as itself “ evidence of it ” ! It is nothing but independence and will from beginning to end ; and the moment one looks the least below the surface the hollowness and falsity of the position assumed is clear enough. And it is ever so, when the Word is departed from and man’s judgment and man’s opinion is taken as the guide and principle of action, seeking to maintain a union by concord and agreement. Separation from evil—a Divine God-given principle, is lowered to division—a mere carnal and evil thing.

I have not referred to the various statements put forth by Mr. Raven’s partizans as individuals, though they are easy enough to be answered and refuted ; they one and all applaud him and his teachings, though some confess to having had qualms of conscience at the beginning, which they got rid of by personal intercourse with the teacher—disobedience to the command of Romans xvi., 17. I have confined myself to noticing

briefly the varied action of the companies who support him, and to pointing out what is sadly evident, that each company acts for itself, and makes its own terms as to what it will go on with, and what it will judge as evil. The refusal of principle, the denial of the application of Divine principles, as if they did not *always* apply, is distressing beyond expression. One's only resource and comfort is that our Lord sees and knows it all, and that He will, and indeed can, only accord His blessed presence—an inestimable treasure—to those who in brokenness of spirit, and in humbleness of mind, stand apart from evil for His sake—slowly, stumblingly, and hesitatingly it may be—but feeling where His honour and the glory of His Name and Person are touched, and shrinking from it, and standing apart from those who think and speak thus of Him, content to bear all reproach, and shame, false accusation and hard words, rather than suffer a word or thought that is slighting to Him. The days are evil indeed, and it is little we can do for Him; but at least we can refuse communion with that which defames our Lord, and we can well leave all effort to keep together by lightly treating evil regarding Himself in the hands of Him who, more than two thousand years ago, said to His faithless people, “Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces: and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together and it shall come to nought,” and who added “Sanctify the Lord of hosts Himself: and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread. And He shall be for a sanctuary.”

P. A. H.

January, 1891.

APPENDIX.

For the Assembly.

CROYDON ; Sep., 1890.

As saints from other places have desired to know our position with reference to the present sorrowful position, we send forth a few words in the hope of being able to help some of the Lord's dear people who have been distressed, and even terrified, by charges of heresy and blasphemy which have been brought, *but never proved*, against a servant of the Lord. In consequence of a letter of commendation from Greenwich having been brought here, it was decided, without dissent at an Assembly meeting of the three gatherings in Croydon that we still continued as we had ever been, in fellowship with the Assembly in Greenwich. It was added "That brethren in Croydon were not thereby necessarily pledged to accept all Mr Raven had said or done."

We wish it to be clearly understood that we are not gathered to any particular set of doctrines, no matter how true they may be ; nor do we mean (by God's grace) to tolerate dishonour to the Person of our Lord. By doing either we should be off the ground of the Church of God.

We have failed to find heresy, blasphemy or false doctrine in the teaching assailed, or anything contrary to the Word of God. The same truths are distinctly taught in the writings of our late dear brother Mr. Darby, which are accessible to all. We only wish our brother Mr. Raven had stated them as clearly. We are thankful to be able to say that certain expressions that have troubled many have been withdrawn and condemned by their authors.

In our judgment the responsibility of the division lies at the door of those who raised unwarranted, and, in some instances false reports, by circulating pamphlet after pamphlet wherever there were saints gathered to the Lord's name.

We deplore the action of those who have gone out, and are thus guilty of schism, believing that if there had been true

brotherly confidence and waiting on God, the difficulties might have been removed, the truth clearly unfolded to the edification of the saints, and thereby this terrible dishonour to the Lord's name in the scattering of His people, prevented.

Signed on behalf of the Assembly,

* *
* *
* *

London ; October 13th, 1890.

Brothers (about 500 in number) assembled in Park Street, on Tuesday, 7th October, in accordance with the following notice read in all the meetings in London on Lord's Day, the 5th October :

“In consequence of the circulation amongst us of various statements reported to have been made dishonouring to the Person of our blessed Lord, it is purposed that meetings of brothers shall be held, D.V., at Park Street, on Tuesday, at 3 and 7 o'clock, in order to give expression to our united repudiation and abhorrence of such Christ dishonouring statements ; yet we have unabated confidence in the power of the Lord in the midst by His Spirit to deal with the evil in those assemblies where such evil may be taught or propagated.”

Whilst not admitting the truth of all the charges recently published on the testimony of one witness, contrary to Deut. xix. 15, and 2 Cor. xiii. 1, the brothers with one heart and mind repudiated and utterly condemned certain statements dishonouring to the Lord, which it is admitted have been made amongst those gathered together to His name.

At the same time the fullest confidence was expressed in the faithfulness of God, and in the continued presence of the Lord, with the twos or threes gathered together to His name, and that by His grace and power, all unscriptural statements, savouring of irreverence, speculation or levity on such a holy subject, if not already judged and withdrawn with true confession by the authors, will be dealt with in a scriptural way by the local gatherings responsible to maintain what is due to the name of the Lord.

Brothers agreed earnestly to exhort brethren everywhere to distrust themselves in conversing on the deep and holy things of God, and to discountenance and abstain from all unprofitable and vain discussions, especially on subjects relating to the Person of the blessed Lord, outside that which is revealed in Holy Scripture for the comfort and edification of God's people.

The recent practice of printing and publishing evil statements (without first having brought them home to their authors, and sought their restoration; and then, if necessary before the local assembly responsible to deal with the matter), was absolutely condemned as evil; the evil being aggravated in the case of A. C. O., by his refusal to furnish the name of the author of the blasphemous statement given on page 46 of his pamphlet.

* * *
 * * *
 * * *
 * * *
 * * *
 * * *

Bristol; Lord's Day, 19th Oct., 1890.

A question having been forced upon us by some in our midst as to the continuance of our fellowship with the Assembly at Thornton House, Greenwich, in view of alleged heresy charged against a brother there, and said to be countenanced by that Assembly, we gathered to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ at Bristol, having heard and weighed before the Lord what these brethren have brought before us in support of such charges, have judged that there is no proof of the accusation. We therefore refuse to separate from that Assembly, believing that to do so would be the sin of schism.

We believe that the present confusion amongst us is in great part the result of the abandonment of Divine principles on the part of those who first made these accusations, who according to godly order, should have preferred them with supporting evidence, before the Assembly at Greenwich. Having ignored this Assembly, neglecting Divine order, they circulated their statements far and wide, thus throwing the saints everywhere into confusion, and causing division amongst those gathered to the Lord's name. At the same time we regret and deplore that there have been in some quarters discussions as to our

Lord's blessed Person, which have resulted in expressions dishonouring to Him.

We desire utterly to repudiate these, and have confidence in the Lord that the assemblies generally will refuse to allow unholy speculations to be entered upon or to remain unjudged if made.

In conclusion, we would own before the Lord that there has been a needs be for His chastisement, and we desire to humble ourselves under His mighty hand, while still confiding in His unfailing grace.

On behalf of the saints gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ at Bristol, and meeting at Orchard Street ; 31, Victoria Street, Clifton ; Providence Road, Stapleton Road ; Lower Redland Road, Redland.

* * *
 * *
 * * *
 * *
 * *
 * *
 * *
 * *

At an Assembly Meeting of the Saints gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, at 40, Westland Row, Dublin, held on 30th November, 1890, the following Declaration was accepted, and is now issued by the Assembly.

Having for some time past had under our serious consideration, the writings of our brother F. E. Raven, contained in his papers and letters on the one hand ; with the charges of blasphemy, heresy, and of teaching doctrine subversive of Christianity made against him on the other ; resulting in much distress, distraction, and division amongst the saints gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ ; we desire to express our deep humiliation and sorrow before the Lord, for the low spiritual state of which this is the outcome, owing it as our common shame, whilst bowing under His chastening hand upon us.

With regard to those charges of blasphemy, heresy, and of teaching doctrine subversive of Christianity ; after patient, prayerful, and most careful investigation, we do not find proof in his writings to substantiate them, and regret that they

ould have been made and are still persisted in; and we cannot therefore but deplore and condemn the division that has taken place, as being without Scripture warrant.

Furthermore, we condemn as contrary to God's order, the action of brethren who initiated this division at Ealing and Bexhill, in that they did not first prefer these charges before the gathering with which the brother charged was locally connected, and failing to obtain the results they desired, they did not then take counsel with brethren generally, with the view of acting in the "unity of the Spirit" as inculcated in Eph. iv.

Nevertheless, we feel bound to place on record our condemnation of the one-sided, defective, and unguarded manner in which Mr. Raven has presented the truths he desired to unfold; and also the irreverent form (however unintentional) of his statement relative to the infancy of our blessed Lord, and we regret that brethren did not accept his offer made at an early stage of this trouble, to cease from ministering; and we consider that our brother should cease to minister until confidence be restored.

We desire to express our utter abhorrence of the attempts of some to divide the life of the Lord Jesus, whom "no man knoweth," (Matt. xi. 27), leading to the unholy expressions, which have been uttered, though thankful, that, so far as we know, these expressions have been judged and withdrawn.

With confidence of heart in our ever-gracious Lord, and fully assured of His continued presence "till He come" amongst the two or three gathered together to His Name, on the ground of the one body, and in fellowship as heretofore with all so gathered we turn to our ever-blessed God and Father, who is able to maintain us "in all lowliness and meekness; with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of Spirit in the bond of peace."—Eph. iv., 2, 3.

Signed on behalf of the Assembly,

* •	• * •
* *	* * *
* * *	* * *
* * *	* *

We feel it right to add that we believe some have withdrawn from fellowship, owing to this Declaration having been adopted by the Assembly.

As regards my letter, printed by P. A. H., grave objections regarding some statements contained in it having been pointed

out to me, I would say, on reconsidering it, that had I printed it I would at once withdraw it from print ; and I now publicly express my unfeigned sorrow for having written it. As it is I have withdrawn it so far as is in my power.

As to dissecting the holy and inscrutable mystery of the incarnation, or of the Person of the blessed Lord, the idea of it is abhorrent to my mind. I should not approach it wittingly, save to adore and worship, and I would condemn every expression in my letter which has even the appearance of doing otherwise, or of casting a shadow on the glory of Him who—the Redeemer Son of God—is all the more to be adored because of the grace that brought Him down so low for our sakes ; and where in anywise my letter traverses by reason the boundary line of faith and scripture, or leaves room for conclusions to be drawn contrary thereto, even though these conclusions were foreign to my mind, in the withdrawal of my letter, I unreservedly condemn it.

As to the comments on it in P. A. H.'s tract, I shall simply add that I deny emphatically holding what he deduces from my letter.

For the writing of the letter I am solely responsible : it was not intended for publication, nor was it sent by me to any other than the brother to whom I wrote it. He replied disapproving of it. It passed out of my mind, and had it not been for a copy which I allowed the one to take in whose house I was staying when I wrote it, it would not have been heard of again. That the Lord has allowed it to be printed and published to the world by another, without my knowledge, is, I doubt not, for whatever other cause at least for this, to bring forth from me the public condemnation of every word in it that affects or appears to affect the glory and honour of Him who, “the Babe in the manger,” in lowly grace was none the less, and as truly then as ever, “the only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father,” “God manifest in flesh.”

E. C.

June, 1890

It is to be remarked that the letter referred to by the writer was circulated in manuscript, both in England and abroad, for six months before it appeared in print, in “Be not Deceived.” The writer speaks of the above as his “public condemnation of every word” in his letter “that affects or appears to affect the glory and honour of Him who, “the Babe in the manger,” was none the less God manifest in flesh,” but he does not point out

one single sentence or word which he would change or withdraw as affecting or appearing to affect His glory. All this is too vague to be of any value. It is not for others to judge his thoughts—they are his own; his utterances belong to all. He denies the construction put upon his words, but lets the words remain as they were, and, three months later, he says he would be thankful if anyone would show him anything in his letter that is unscriptural. One sentence was, speaking of our Lord as a Babe in the manger, "A babe has not such communion"—the "infinite perfection of unclouded communion," &c.

P. A. H.

PRICE ONE PENNY.