

## "The Plymouth Brethren,"

a reply to the "Christian Observer", Art. II., December, 1866.

W. Kelly.

This evangelical magazine again assails the "Plymouth Brethren," as they call them. Are they wise? It may be doubted; for while they own their hopelessness of convincing those they oppose, we are pretty sure that, the more they write on the subject, the more they expose their want of acquaintance with the principles of those attacked, with the Scriptures, and even with their own indefensible position. Many godly and intelligent persons outside "Brethren," some even in their own Anglican fold, are ashamed of their advocate, and of his objections, which are never well-founded, sometimes suicidal, always frivolous. We are not so unreasonable as to expect that those who pronounce the clerical system to be anti-scriptural can ever find favour in the eyes of clergy as such; but there are servants of Christ who, spite of being clergymen, value the faith of those who at all cost carry out practically what they themselves know to be according to God's word. Naturally, among laymen so-called, there are many more who agree with us that the clerical system grew at best out of a graft of Judaism, that it is wholly opposed to Scriptural ministry as instituted of the Lord, and that it is inconsistent not merely with the best interests but with the fundamental constitution of the Church of God. Of course, those who justify that innovation of patristic times cannot cry up those who denounce it as sinful. The next best thing they can do, as far as we (not they) are concerned, is to cry us down; for this always makes manifest their own weakness, gives candid Anglicans an opportunity of comparing scriptural principles and practice with their own ways as well as ours, and keeps the subject as one of present, permanent, and great importance before all who read and hear. More prudent adversaries avoid the perilous game of confronting the Scriptures as to ecclesiastical ground, walk, and discipline, on which the so-called "Brethren" seek to act in the face of Christendom which let them slip from the earliest days as impracticable.

By those who read this journal, whether among or outside "Brethren," a refutation of these articles can hardly be wanted. The writer is therefore under a surprising and groundless illusion if he really believes what he says, that the former article "seems indeed (and here it has exceeded our expectations) to have gone, like a Palliser shot, right through all the iron coating of their system, and to have caused much fright, even within the vessel, by the scattered splinters." (Page 896.) There is as much truth in this romance as there was weight in the arguments; but the self-complacency of the whole thing is singularly grotesque.

In the same page the writer claims no small vantage-ground in being able to look at us from without. Will he dispute that it is better sometimes to look from within as well as without? But granting that a look from without has its value, does he not perceive that on his own showing the advantage is greatly on their side who have examined Anglicanism as well as "the Brethren" both from without and from within? Our mathematical friend ought not to need the lesson that a whole is greater (or better) than a part. For myself, I believe that the proposed criterion is only partially true, and quite fails in divine things. There is a testimony to those without, sufficient to leave without excuse, as will be seen another day, and now used by the grace of God to produce conviction through faith; but all our best blessings in Christ, or even in the Church, His body, must be tasted within in order to be adequately known. But let us hear our accuser.

"One of the gravest charges we have to make against the Plymouth Brethren is, that they take the

*most extraordinary liberties with God's Holy Word.\** While professing the most entire subjection to every word of the Lord, and chiding all who do not join them with the want of that subjection, they set aside the far greater part of Scripture as not applicable to the present age of the Church, and as of no present authority or obligation. Here we shall be met again with the charge of misrepresentation; but we assert that this is no misrepresentation in *the sense we mean*. Their great knowledge of Scripture, and their readiness in applying it in its spiritual sense, is one of the things we continually hear advanced in favour of the Plymouth Brotherhood. We fully admit that they are most of them well up in the contents of the Bible; that they are very ready with quotations; that they can find a spiritual sense for almost every word of it: but here lies our complaint. They *spiritualize* it till they *pulverize* it all into fine dust, which any one's breath may blow clean away. Now for the proofs. They condemn us of the Church of England for repeating the Psalms of David in our Christian service; these, they say, are *Jewish*, expressing feelings belonging to the Old Dispensation, and altogether unsuited to the now: thus the whole Book of Psalms goes aside, except in the spiritual sense in which parts of it may be thought to relate to the person or work of Christ. With this aside goes the whole of the Old Testament, except so far as that is prophetic or can be spiritualized." (Page 897.)

\*The italics are the *Christian Observer's*.

Did one ever hear greater confusion and absurdity, giving the writer credit for meaning to say the truth? The first proof, then, of this heinous charge is that we! *spiritualize* the Psalms! That we read them habitually alone and with our families, that we hear them in our assemblies, that we preach on them and expound them and write on them and publish our expositions far and wide, and this not alone historically or prophetically, but also for our soul's profit and blessing and the present edification, of all believers, does not satisfy. "Here lies our complaint. They spiritualize." Now I appeal to any intelligent man in the English Establishment: Does not the *Christian Observer* herein state exactly the reverse of the truth in both its parts? Is it not plain and notorious and undeniable matter of fact that those who use the Psalms in their Christian service must necessarily spiritualize them? and that one main reason why "Brethren" do not use them as the expression of their worship is because they refuse to spiritualize the Psalms of David? They believe the Psalms in their plain and direct meaning, and accordingly see in them the sympathies of the Messiah with the godly Jews, also their Aaronic priesthood, incense, sacrifices, and all the other appurtenances of an earthly land and a city here below. All this the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches them to be now superseded for the partakers of the heavenly calling, on the footing of accomplished redemption and of a priest after the order of Melchizedec, no longer typified or predicted, but actually on high appearing in the presence of God for us.

It is therefore the *Christian Observer's* own system, not Plymouth Brethrenism, which really comes under the charge of spiritualizing. For those who employ the Psalms of David in the christian service as the proper and full expression of christian worship are obliged to fall back on the mystical process in its extreme form in order to effect a tolerable metamorphosis. Hence David's throne must be made the throne of God; Israel, Judah, etc., must set forth Christians; Zion and Jerusalem must be the Church now on earth, now in heaven; the pleasant land has to be construed of the Father's house; the wars must be taken as a figure of spiritual conflicts, and the destructive judgments on the enemies of the Jews must be converted after some analogous fashion. If this be not spiritualizing, what is? Is it not the basis on which reposes the use of the Psalter in so-called christian services all over Christendom? Was it not the system (probably derived from Platonizing Jews) of Clemens Alex., Origen, as of Jerome and other Latins, and soon prevalent, all but universal? From this mischievous system the Reformation delivered only in part, not merely because the Reformers, like ourselves, were but

disciples imperfectly instructed, but because they were much fettered and hindered by their respective governments from carrying out all they saw. However this be, and whether spiritualizing be right or wrong, the misapprehension of our censor is as complete as can be. For spiritualizing, which he so unqualifiedly blames, is abjured by the "Brethren" and is in full force in the Establishment; and the use of the Psalms in the christian service, for which he contends, is only consistent on the ground of spiritualizing, which he mistakenly lays at our door.

The truth is that the Psalms, like the law, are divinely inspired and profitable to all: only like the law, they must be used lawfully. I quite acquiesce in the principle of the *Christian Observer* that what is called spiritualizing is dangerous where it supplants or interferes with the real distinct scope of the Holy Ghost in any part of God's word. But I appeal to his own conscience: does he not perceive that he wrote under some strange spell which inverted his vision and falsified his conclusion? For beyond a doubt it is his own system, not ours, which, to accommodate the Psalms to christian purposes, yields to the common error of spiritualizing, which we both agree in denouncing. "Brethren" however, I humbly think, enjoy a decided superiority over their unexpected ally in this, that they honestly act out what they believe by God's grace — at least such is their hearty desire and strenuous aim. Hence, rejecting the later patristic and still popular mysticizing of the Psalms, they believe that the evident character and contents of that wondrous book demonstrate it to be an inspired provision, as for the past, so for the future devotions of Israel, in public and private; while it also opens its treasures meanwhile to us, Christians, furnishing copious and rich and touching expression to the heart's exercises and outpourings before God for the present and all time. In our walk and varying states of soul, *beside* prediction of Christ and His work, who shall set limits to the measure of our appropriation and enjoyment of the Psalms? Certainly not the "Brethren." Here the *Christian Observer* is inexcusably ignorant and mistaken. If he takes the ground of competent knowledge, I arraign him of positive untruth. The "Practical Reflections on the Psalms" in the *Bible Treasury*, not to speak of what everybody knows who knows "Brethren" moderately, suffice to contradict flatly his statement. Indeed the New Testament freely applies the Psalms as we use them freely. But thence to infer that the Psalms contemplate our present standing and service as Christians is as false and unreasonable as it would be to deduce, from a similar employment of Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, that we are not under grace but law, with an earthly priesthood, carnal sacrifices, and a worldly sanctuary.

The same principle applies to the Old Testament. None but the most ignorant fancy it is the same state of things now that the blood of the new covenant is shed, though the knowledge of it is not yet given to the house of Israel. The writings of the Old Testament mainly occupy themselves with the state of people under the law, save that the prophets, as indeed the types of all the other books, looked on to better things. Faith now knows, as to all the promises of God, the Yea and Amen in Christ. All Scripture accordingly is *for us* in these days of the gospel; the mistake is that it is all *about us*. The state before the fall differed essentially from that which followed the fall; and new conditions ensued on the flood. The call of Abram and the dealings with the fathers were not at all the same as those known previously. So also the days of Moses saw new ways of God, as the law of course raised the question of righteousness in a more definite shape than had been before it was given. Then, again, without noticing the details of Israel's history or the times of the Gentiles which began with the supremacy of Babylon, the coming of Christ and yet more His cross laid the foundation for all that is now or ever shall be, though even so the age to come will be wholly diverse from that which now is, and the eternal state, when the new heavens and new earth are in their full and final consummation, will differ from both as indeed from all the past dispensations also. Now the Scriptures treat of all these varying states from first to last, and the revelations of God adapt themselves in His wisdom to all that has been or will be during the vicissitudes of the earth or rather of men upon it. That they are all about us who now believe

in Christ is untenable; that they are all for our instruction and direction, none can hold too tenaciously, which is indeed the reason why we notoriously study the whole from Genesis to Revelation. If they considered that any part of the Old Testament was not of real present value to the soul, it is absurd to suppose that "Brethren" generally, abroad or at home, teachers and taught, would read, hear, teach, meditate on it as they do. The only persons entitled to bring such a charge are men so grossly in the dark as to deny all difference of dispensation, if there be such. If the *Christian Observer* allow (as I presume they do) different dispensations, they admit the principle which lies at the bottom of their objection: all else as to this is a question of detail and degree.

"But worse still: it is not the Old Testament only that is thus made null and void as respects authoritative instruction, but also a great part of the New Testament. The Gospel of St. Matthew, for instance, it is assumed, was written specially for the Jews, and contains peculiar Jewish phraseology, such as the expression, 'the kingdom of heaven:' therefore it is ruled that it relates specially, if not only, to the intermediate dispensation, or period between the birth of Christ and the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost when according to the Plymouthites, and not before, the Church of God came into existence." (Page 897.)

"Brethren" need not to be told that in every respect this is a string of blunders, founded on truth or statements which the writer did not even comprehend. "As respects authoritative instruction," they hold that *all Scripture* stands on the same foundation which never fails. They do hold, as christian writers have done from the earliest days to our own that Matthew was inspired to write his gospel in view of the Jews and the relations of their Messiah, and the consequences of His rejection; but they see with equal clearness that "the kingdom of heaven" goes through the entire dispensation, as it is called, in its present mysterious form (Matt. 13), and that it is the only Gospel in which Christ announces the building of His Church (Matt. 16), and lays down the spirit which ought to regulate discipline in the case of one brother trespassing against another. (Matt. 18) The *Christian Observer* ought to be more careful: the allegations are quite unfounded, though it may be unintentionally.

As to the charge that the Church of God, Christ's body, began at Pentecost, it is quite true that such is the conviction of most or all "Brethren," though no one is required to believe it. The *Christian Observer* reasons thus: — "Mr. Kelly fails to see that he has fallen into the absurdity, in his interpretation of the words — 'The Lord *added* to the Church daily such as should be saved' — of making them to be *added* to a thing that, according to him, did not exist; or rather, to go a little further back, the three thousand souls converted on the day of Pentecost, respecting whom the word 'added' is first used, must thus have been added on to nothing, if the Church had no existence before!" (Page 898.) The blunder is exclusively on the part of the *Christian Observer*. Even if the Lord's adding to the Church daily such as should be saved had referred to Pentecost, the error was disgraceful; for the Lecture criticised had drawn attention to the 120 names of brethren in Jerusalem. Were they, including the twelve apostles, *nothing*? But the case is in fact much worse. For in Acts 2: 47 the Holy Spirit (of whom the *Christian Observer* likes to hear as little as possible, at least through the "Brethren") is describing the additions which the Lord was making *from day to day after Pentecost* with its three thousand souls added to the previous band of disciples and the Twelve. Does the *Christian Observer* fail to see now that itself alone has fallen into absurdity at the very moment when it was seeking, without reason, to charge it on another?

"He [Mr. K.] finds the word Church for the first time in those words of Christ to Peter — 'Upon this rock I will build My Church,' and because the future tense is here used, 'I will build,' he infers that this must have had reference to what was to take place at the future period of the Pentecost; and because he never meets with the word 'Church' in the New Testament before, that no such thing was

before known of! He thus falls into precisely the same mistake as the Baptists," etc. (Page 898.) Perhaps it may save time if I at once summon not a P. B. but a Bp. of Chester in days of yore, who has never been surpassed there in the combination of solid learning with excellent powers of mind, especially of reasoning — the celebrated John Pearson in the most celebrated of his writings, a textbook for Anglican clergy everywhere. "The only way to attain unto the knowledge of the true notion of the Church is to search into the New Testament, and from the places there which mention it, to conclude what is the nature of it. To which purpose it will be necessary to take notice that our Saviour, first speaking of it, mentioneth it as that which (Matt. 16: 18) then was not, but afterwards was to be; as when He spake unto the great apostle, 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church;' but when he ascended into heaven, and the Holy Ghost came down, when Peter had converted 'three thousand souls' (Acts 2: 41), which were added to the 'hundred and twenty' (Acts 1: 15) disciples, then was there a Church ( . . . ) for after that we read, 'The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.' (Acts 2: 47.) A Church then our Saviour promised should be built, and by a promise made before His death; after His ascension, and upon the preaching of St. Peter, we find a Church built or constituted, and that of a nature capable of daily increase." In his posthumous work containing his "Lectiones in Acta Apostolorum" all this is given again as his ripest judgment, which, as far as it goes, coincides entirely with the "Brethren" and condemns the *Christian Observer* of ignorance, not only of Scripture but of their own ablest writers, where they were most confident.\*

\*Let the reader bear in mind that any names or views of men cited in this paper are not here regarded as of the least authority. They are summoned as Anglican witnesses of respectability to show the unreasonableness of the *Christian Observer's* criticism and abuse. Take another sample from Dr. Whitby's comment on Matthew 16: 18 (and W. was and perhaps is the favourite commentator with the bishops, professors of divinity, and other leaders of the English Establishment). "First, then, observe that our Lord speaks here of his church, not as a thing in present being, or as a building now erected, but as hereafter to be raised, and therefore doth not say, οἰκοδομῶ, I *build* at present, but οἰκοδομήσω, upon this rock I will hereafter build my church, the christian church commencing after our Saviour's resurrection and ascension; of such a church to be hereafter founded by St. Peter's preaching to the Jew and Gentile, and the baptizing of men converted by his preaching, our Lord here plainly speaketh in this text . . . Secondly, observe this promise punctually was fulfilled, by our Lord's using St. Peter's ministry, in laying the foundation of a Christian church among the Jews and Gentiles, and in his being the first preacher to them of that faith he doth here confess, and making the first proselytes to it; we therefore, suitably to this promise, find that Peter laid the first foundations of a church among the Jews, by the conversion of three thousand souls, (Acts 2: 41,) who, when they *gladly* had embraced St. Peter's doctrine, were all *baptized*, and then we first find mention of a Christian church in these words, 'And the Lord added daily to the Church such as should be saved,' (ver. 47.)" (Whitby's Paraphrase, etc. in loc., Pitman's edition.)

Hear again: "Is Mr. Kelly really so ignorant as not to know that the word ἐκκλησία is constantly used by the Septuagint translators for the Hebrew word which in our English translation is rendered 'congregation' or 'assembly?' The idea of Church, then, was no new thing. Mr. Kelly makes a great parade of his knowledge of the Greek, and of the various readings of the New Testament, where it suits his purpose: he could even tell us that 'the Holy Ghost' used the singular 'the Church' where our version has Churches (Acts 9: 31); but how is it that he has not discovered that the word, 'the Church' in the passage, 'the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved,' is not found in the ancient MSS. but is an unauthorized interpolation; and yet upon this *groundless* basement he has built his grand fabric, that now for the first time God's Church came into existence." (Pages 898, 899.)

Now in the same page of the *Christian Observer* there is printed an extract from my Lectures on the Church, which to any man of sense and temper would testify (if the writer questioned my acquaintance with the fact), that the LXX. (as is also done exceptionally in the New Testament) employ the word ἑκκλησία in the sense of the congregation of Israel. I expressly said "The Church, in the New Testament sense of the word," *i.e.*, as the body of Christ; and I challenge this writer, or anybody else, to produce instances from the Septuagint where ἑκκλησία is so used. His insinuation, his logic, and his learning are equally at fault, not to speak of good manners, which I hope one may expect from a decent evangelical journal. If this be so, "the idea of the Church" was a new thing in the sense in question; for there never was before even the thought divulged of believing Jews and Gentiles taken out of their natural associations and united on earth in one body with the Head glorified in heaven. And so far is it from being true that my books referred to contain a parade of Greek and various readings, that, on the contrary, every scholar must see that I refrain from these topics save where the truth would be, in my judgment, seriously affected by reticence. Further, it was my dislike to talk of "the Greek" and "the right translation," which led me to speak, as I do not infrequently, of the blessed "Spirit of God" saying so and so, which I think I never do unless *perfectly* sure of my ground. But enough of this.

As to the criticism on Acts 2: 47, I recommend the *Christian Observer* to beware of damaging its character by allowing men to venture on that serious task who are such novices as my reviewer. If his ignorance made him ridiculously timid and captious (not to say more) as to Acts 9: 31, his ignorance makes him ridiculously rash as to Acts 2: 47. "How is it that he [Mr. K.] has not discovered," etc. Let me answer that I have not now discovered anything of what he says, but that I am perfectly sure he knows hardly anything of the matter, no matter what books he had to help him. His statement is in every point of view unfounded. 1, I knew the various readings of this verse quite familiarly, but a statement of them here would have been mere "parade," because the determination of the point is not clear or sure. 2, It is false that the words "the Church" are not found "in the ancient MSS." Is not the famous Codex Bezae of Cambridge a venerable manuscript? Is not Laud's copy of the Acts (now in the Bodleian) an "ancient MS.?" 3, So far is it from being "an unauthorized interpolation," that it is the reading of the vast majority of manuscripts, supported by both the Syriac, the Arabic, and Slavonic versions, not to speak of early citations; though it is wanting in the Sinai, Vatican, Alexandrian, and Rescript of Paris, a few juniors, and the rest of the versions. 4, So far from being "a *groundless* basement," (as says this slashing *sutor ultra crepidam*), the greatest of living editors, Prof. Tischendorf, who had yielded in his first edition of the Greek Testament, has replaced τη ἑκκλησία in his following editions (except of course his strange Greco-Latin one, Paris 1842), and Griesbach, who is inferior in acumen to none of the past editors, never removed the words.\* But the fact is, that the editors who, like Lachmann, omit τη ἑκκλησία take ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό from the beginning of Acts 3 (as in the received text). Now this makes the sense in substance the same as if τη ἑκκλησία were read. "And the Lord was adding daily those that should be saved together." In this case Acts 5: 11 would be the first occurrence of the word, referring to the assembly, or Church, as an existing and known institution; but this would fall in with the idea that the assembly, not yet begun to be built when Christ was on earth, actually commenced at Pentecost and is ever afterwards recognised as a subsisting fact. Lastly, even if the words were removed, my doctrine of the Church is affected no more by their removal than the doctrine of the Trinity by the exclusion of the unquestionable interpolation in 1 John 5. Nor would it be shaken if there were half a dozen dubious insertions of the word ἑκκλησία, for happily both the word and the general truth, presented in a variety of forms and phrases, cover a large part of the Acts of the Apostles as well as the Epistles of Paul.

\* As a striking evidence of the precariousness of the clause one way or another, I would cite the exceeding vacillation here of a man in whom learning and piety and spiritual intelligence united to

make an unusually good judge of these matters, J. Alb. Bengel, His critical opinions in general were carefully formed and rarely changed. But here, in his ed. maj. of 1734, he only cites the omission of τῆ ἐκκλησίᾳ in his margin, or foot of the page, to disapprove of it. In His Gnomon, 1741, he approves of the omission. In his ed. min. of 1753 he is in suspense. Hence in the Spicileg. Lectt. Varr. at the end of the ed. of 1790 (drawn up by E. Bengel) there is no remark whatever on Acts 2: 47 as furnishing any reading especially worthy of attention; whereas it is noted on Acts 9: 31, "ex c. xvi. 5 pluralis videtur irrepsisse. Vim habet h. l., Bengelio iudice, numerus singularis."

The writer next (page 899) repeats (on a vague reference which, as far as I can see, does not confirm in the slightest degree his statement) that Matthew's Gospel is relegated to the transition between the beginning of our Lord's ministry and the development of the christian system. (i.e. Pentecost, page 897). I believe it to be one of his usual blunders; for not only have I failed to discover the smallest ground for it in the "Papers on the Gospels," reprinted from the *Christian Witness*, but it is notoriously contrary to the views which everywhere prevail among "Brethren" on the point. What makes the mistake on his part the graver is that he imputes a motive here, as he often does elsewhere. Some men never seem to feel that there are those on earth who are above every consideration save homage to divine truth. And here it is my duty to tell him that he affirms what is utterly inconsistent with fact, in saying that "the Plymouthites get rid of the application of the parables, which describe, under the phrase 'the kingdom of heaven,' the mixed condition of the Christian Church till the Lord comes again, and confine that to a very limited period." They do neither the one thing nor the other, as every intelligent person who has read their expositions on this gospel, or even short tracts, must know. They teach, on the contrary, that the "kingdom of heaven," though in substance equivalent to and hence often interchangeable with "kingdom of God," differs nevertheless in this that the latter is applied to the state of things while Christ was on earth, the former never is said to be come or set up till He went to heaven. They, as strongly as the *Christian Observer*, do hold that the parables of the kingdom suppose a mixed condition, and that they extend till the Lord comes again. But that "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of heaven" are not absolutely equivalent terms, is clear and certain from the fact that Matthew uses *both* terms, and that you could not always, if ever, substitute "kingdom of heaven" in the few passages of his gospel where "kingdom of God" occurs. Our Lord's teaching we believe to be eternal truth: only we must also bow to His own declaration, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all the truth." And so He did; and we seek to be obedient to His words and to the Holy Ghost's further communications in the Epistles, whether to the Corinthians or to any others. But we suppose that what is addressed to the members of the Church of God, as to matters of common concernment and duty, do not warrant us, or the writer in the *Christian Observer*, to claim the authority of Timothy or Titus.

Mark the sophistry of pp. 899, 900. "How do the Plymouth Brethren, in their 'assemblies,' carry out such injunctions as these? — 'I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.' Again; 'I will that men pray *everywhere* lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting.' This relates, surely, to the general Church, and is of general obligation." 1, What extreme preoccupation to overlook the fact that the same letter may contain matter of common obligation, along with peculiar instructions which suppose and are addressed to one possessed of authority and gift conferred for the work to be done by him! 2, Christian men can and do pray *everywhere* amongst us, while it is impossible on Anglican principles. 3, It is not only fallacious in reasoning but evil in morals to urge that "there is nothing here about waiting till the Holy Ghost sensibly moves us to do these things; they are to be done as a matter of apostolic ordainment." It was the Lord who rebuked Satan's misuse of a scripture with "It is written again." The

*Christian Observer* falls into the same snare. 1 Timothy 2 is not opposed to, but agrees with, 1 Corinthians 14. Paul does not contradict or weaken the earlier communication by the later injunction. Prayer, thanksgiving, prophesying, etc., fall under the common principle of dependence on the power and guidance of the Spirit of God, though they are also regulated by the Lord's authority through the apostolic epistles. To set one against another, as is here done, is the enemy's work. 4. So far are we from making void this part of Scripture, that on the contrary we tax those with that sin who merely borrow from it the names of bishops, elders or presbyters, and deacons and then, set its instructions at nought, besides contenting themselves without the requisite authority. For it is certain by the confession, not only of all the unbiassed, but even of many Anglicans spite of their prejudices, that bishops and presbyters are not two distinct orders but one; and, again, that the diaconate of Scripture has not a feature in common with the unmeaning noviciate which Anglicanism with Popery has inherited from the Catholic system. The christian congregation may look out such trustees of its bounty and external services as deacons; but apostles or their delegates alone can choose elders or bishops. Who then is justly chargeable with setting aside this part of God's holy word? — those who in effect employ it to gain the credit of a scriptural name for their own officials, but who wholly set aside the only source, process, character, and ends of the appointment which Scripture sanctions? or those who, in the fear of God and faith of His word, refuse every infringement of these and all other scriptures, whatever it may cost them? Is it not more humble and deferential to Scripture to confess our lack of due authority rather than to imitate what nobody possesses more than ourselves?

Whether the *Christian Observer* defends the notion of apostolic succession, is unknown to me: as being an evangelical organ, it is to be presumed that they abandon that pretension to others. Who then is to do the work of Paul and Barnabas in ordaining elders? Who is to take up the task deputed to Titus by the Apostle Paul? Those who claim and exercise such authority ought to prove that they are similarly, or at least validly, invested with it by the Lord. The attitude of "Brethren" is simple and clear. We do not go beyond the word of God, and are thankful that, if we cannot do all that the apostles or their delegates did, we can freely do whatever God is pleased to put within our little compass, and find our own blessing and the profit of others proportionate to our fidelity and lowliness, which we pray Him to increase. It is confessed by all men of any weight, and, if it were not, it is patent to every believer in the word of God, that to preach and pray, to baptize and break bread, *never* needed ordination even in presence of the entire college of apostles. Hence our doing any or all these things, as God leads and enables us, is strictly within the limits of the general orders of Him whose we are and whom we serve. If any men exhibit the qualities required in such as desire to be bishops, or elders, and deacons, we own them and their labours, valuing them for their work and submitting to them as over us in the Lord. This 1 Thess. 5, 1 Cor. 16, Rom. 12, show we can do without exceeding our bounds, or imitating Paul and Titus, as some do. Far from narrow views of ministry, we recognize real ministers as well as members in the English Establishment, and of course in the various orthodox Dissenting Societies, as heartily as among our selves. But this does not hinder our conviction that unscriptural arrangements (partly relies of Popery, partly through governmental influence, partly through lack of heed to God's word) have effaced much truth as to the Church and ministry for Christians in general. Is this impossible or even improbable? I am surprised that any man pretending to teach others should fail to distinguish between an exhortation in 1 Timothy 2 meant expressly for all christian men and women, and a charge as to dealing with bishops meant for Timothy. Any and all in Timothy's position may act and ought to act thus; but surely all who do so should have credentials like Timothy. Who are they now? (Page 900.) Those who set up to do what Timothy or Titus did without their authority seem to act "most presumptuously," not those who confine themselves within what they are sure is their duty before God. What would have been thought of, what would have befallen, the Roman citizen in the

days of Domitian or Nerva who, because he found a description of Roman officers (say in Cicero's letters), proceeded incontinently to appoint them alone or with others? "The Plymouth Teachers," as they are called, are clearly on the side of legitimate authority; the *Christian Observer* is here broaching the rights of man, or rather the wrongs of anarchy. The principle of their argument is religious radicalism, their practice is insubjection to Scripture: "Brethren" abhor both.

"Our authority shall again be Mr. Kelly. Upon this point he is most positive and dogmatic. This is one of his statements: 'In fact, as far as the New Testament speaks — and it speaks fully and precisely, (the italics in the following are his own) — *'no one was ever ordained by man to preach the gospel.'*" And what is the refutation? For there is nothing like having a clear, downright ("most positive and dogmatic") statement to deal with, if it be erroneous. "Now this is asserted, be it remembered, in the face of the fact that each of the elders whom Titus was 'to ordain in every city' was to have this qualification, that he was to be one 'holding fast the faithful word, in teaching, that he may be able both to exhort and convince the gainsayers.'" And then he proceeds to compare me to the voice of the Vatican, a pope, etc. Really the *Christian Observer* is fallen to a low ebb if they can put forward no more competent person to defend their own system or to combat those whom they may believe wrong. I warned them already of this writer's inability to do service. If they are still unable to appreciate the state of the case, they have many friends who will discern the worth of such talk as this: argument it is not, still less is it unfolding the precious and sure testimonies of God. Does the writer not comprehend that preaching the gospel, or evangelizing, is wholly distinct from the functions of an elder? I will not accuse him of anything undue in adopting the marginal alternative, though in my judgment the common text is better than the active sense which thus comes in so awkwardly. But letting it pass, no "Plymouth Brother" doubts that an elder was ordained by competent authority, and that his duty was with sound teaching both to exhort and to refute gainsayers; but how does this prove that he or anybody else was ordained to evangelize? Nay, I am bold enough to go farther and to affirm that multitudes preached freely in the best days of the Church, when the fullest authority was there, without question of ordination; and that he who disputes my affirmation seems to me open to the just reproach of excessive boldness and of no less ignorance of his Bible. (See Acts 8: 4; Acts 11: 19-21; Acts 18: 24-28, etc.) Even teaching was not the work for which the elders were chosen, but to rule. Hence, says the apostle (1 Tim. 5: 17), "let the elders that rule (or, take the lead) well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine." Thus, their business was ruling, overseeing, shepherding the church within a given sphere: if they took the lead well, they were to be esteemed worthy of double honour, especially those labouring in word and doctrine, which last clause implies an excellent service that was beyond their *required* episcopal functions. It was necessary that a bishop should be (not exactly "a teacher" but) "apt to teach," possessed of a capacity for instruction. Others might be teachers, yet not eligible for exercising oversight, because of the want of moral power for government, which last was the chief desideratum in an elder.

If Scripture nowhere pledges the perpetuation of an ordaining authority, what is the fair inference? Is it not a perfect standard? Was it not provided for all times and circumstances? Did not God who wrote it give us every requisite for obedience and godly order, individually and corporately, ruler and ruled, teachers and taught, till the Lord come? Is anything lacking to its words which ought to be supplied? It is not "Brethren" at least who imply that it is defective and needs either the supplement of tradition, the system of development, or the new inventions of human wit.

Let us test the principle by facts. Who honour most the Epistles, not to the Corinthians or the Ephesians only, but to Timothy and Titus — the Christians who let the government of the day choose the bishops or elders; or those who own *they* have not those apostolic envoys, and therefore refuse to

go beyond their measure, whether as simple disciples or as possessing gifts as teachers, evangelists, etc.? Far from slighting, it is their sense of the superior place and the definite mission of such as Timothy and Titus, which makes themselves shrink from the pretension to appoint and regulate bishops as those did. There is no arguing in a circle, any more than setting aside the scripture. We cannot but tell the Dissenter that he disobeys them, because in his system the church chooses men to minister in the word and to rule; we cannot but tell the Anglican that he is at least as guilty, because in his system the squire, or the Lord Chancellor, or a college, or the crown chooses similarly: both parties in manifest opposition to the uniform practice of the early Church and to the plain word of God. It needs no "positiveness of a pope," but only the simplicity of faith in Scripture, to know without a doubt that these Dissenting and Anglican methods are at issue with the only principle of ordaining elders laid down in the Bible. Yet because we hold to this firmly and say so, we are charged with nullifying the Epistles to Timothy and Titus and "taking extraordinary liberties with God's written word!" (Page 99l.) As honestly asserting the place of apostolic delegates and cleaving to these very epistles, we are obliged to condemn the present practice of Christendom as palpably unscriptural. Will the *Christian Observer* dare to affirm that Anglican or Dissenting appointments (which indeed cannot both be scriptural) are the same as the apostle enjoined on Timothy and Titus? I can understand his soreness and hard names: it is usual with men who know themselves wrong.

"For what purpose, then, we ask again, *as respects us*, were the Epistles to Timothy and Titus written?" Surely one weighty lesson, and in order not the last perhaps in the present state of Christendom, is that no Christian should sanction a direct violation of that which they teach us as to the appointment of elders. The *Christian Observer* knows perfectly well that Anglican appointments are not according to those epistles, any more than the popular call of Dissent. If any of the "Brethren" set himself to ordain elders because Titus was commissioned so to do, there would be good reason to challenge his authority and to denounce his acts. Is it not rather too bad to blame us because we refuse any such assumption in deference to these and other scriptures, and frankly allow that none of us has the place of a Timothy or a Titus in this respect?

But the second lesson we gather from these epistles is that a very small part indeed is confined to this peculiar relation of the apostolic delegates to elders. It is in fact with them as with almost all other scriptures: if certain points here and there are special, much the greater portion directly concerns believers in general, and every whit is or ought to be instructive to us all. Thus, from first to last in these epistles, how much there is of the deepest importance to every Christian! The value of sound doctrine, the rejection of fables and unprofitable questionings, the end of what the apostle enjoined, even love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and unfeigned faith, and the danger of missing this in the desire to be law-teachers, with the lack of intelligence which invariably accompanies it (for such pervert the law unlawfully to the righteous, instead of knowing and using its application to the lawless, impious, unholy, violent, unclean, and in short anything else contrary to sound doctrine according to the gospel of the glory committed to the apostle): all this is but the beginning of 1 Timothy 1. But why need I thus enlarge? The present value "*as respects us*" is unquestionable; and even that which was exceptional, so far from dying with Paul or Timothy, has this momentous and living use, that it furnishes a divine test to judge whether those who now assume Timothy's functions as to elders have Timothy's qualifications and authority. My knowledge of a magistrate's office and duties, according to the country's laws, does not warrant me to set up myself or my neighbour as a magistrate; but, far from being useless, it may, in a day of difficulty, be the means of preserving others besides myself from owning those who claim to be in the commission of the peace without the necessary authorization (*i.e.*, in fact, from rebellion).

There is a third lesson of great practical value deducible even from the special instructions in the pastoral epistles, where there was no apostle nor apostolic man to appoint local functionaries. They, clearly state the qualities spiritual, moral, and even circumstantial, required in bishops or elders. The possession of them all, however unquestionable, would not in my judgment warrant a man to call himself an elder or bishop, nor another who was not duly authorized, nor the assembly so to call him: but it would be the strongest ground, where due ordination could not be had, for all godly-minded saints to be subject to such, to recognize them as labouring and taking the lead among brethren in the Lord, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. "Obey your rulers (or leaders, chief men, τοῖς ἡγουμένοις ὑμῶν), and submit yourselves," would thus apply to the conscience wherever such men watched over their souls in the fear of God, though no apostle or apostolic delegate had ever penetrated there.

This may suffice for the argument drawn from the pastoral epistles. A wise opponent would have carefully retired from that field. For it is the part of God's oracles which sentences to death ordinary ministerial appointment, as hopelessly as 1 Corinthians exposes the actual departure of Christians from God's order for the assembly, and from the principle and exercise of gifts in it. (1 Cor. 12, 1 Cor. 14.) Do they so much as think of their indifference to these things?

It is strange that such an effusion should pass muster with a staff of (I hope) grave, godly, and educated, if not learned, men.

As to the remarks in the rest of page 901, it is due neither to the writer nor to myself, still less to the Master, that I should dwell on such improprieties. "To our view, his '*Fundamental Truths*' are so many *fundamental errors*. It would be easy to demonstrate, had we space for it, that he is wrong, most egregiously wrong, upon every one of his points. He may well be afraid of mathematics. By his method we would undertake to prove anything whatever out of the Bible," etc. Uninstructed minds are apt to over-estimate their own powers and attainments; but such a specimen of self-confidence, with so little bottom for it, one rarely meets with. There is no man possessed of a fair knowledge of Scripture who does not hold with me, that God's word is sometimes explicit, sometimes not, and that only unbelief doubts its preciousness in either case. Let any instance be produced where explicitness was predicated of it or denied to it wrongly (both of which errors might easily be made by anyone): if I have been guilty in this respect, show it like an honest man; if not, confess that "the true sectarian style" is on the part of those who can thus prate maliciously at random. It is no enviable strong-mindedness which can do without God's word, or which feels not the precious wisdom of its utterances and even of its silence. To the believer all is perfect and instructive: but all men have not faith, and to such every expression of spiritual enjoyment is offensive and suspicious. Habitually acting without Scripture, they must keep up the courage of those subject to their influence, and so run down our pressure of subjection to Scripture, as the Papists do, by undertaking after our method "to prove anything whatever out of the Bible." Need I say that they prove nothing beyond their own evil eye and self-sufficiency? With every desire to avoid a style so unbecoming, let us pass on to page 902 where the writer recurs to the supposed error of believing that the Church of God, Christ's body, began after the ascension of our Lord and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Now we do not "assume" but produce the amplest testimony of scripture that the Spirit's baptism of believing Jews and Gentiles into one body, the body of Christ, did not exist before the middle-wall of partition was broken down by the cross of Christ and the Holy Spirit was sent down to unite the members to Him and to each other. It is this state of union with a glorified Head which is not found in the Old Testament. On the contrary, by God's law the Jew (believer or not) was peremptorily, in every detail of walk and worship, separated from the Gentile (believer or not). Nay, even during our Lord's ministry here below, the same separation was, as a rule, maintained when He

sent out the twelve to preach over the land of Israel (Matt. 10: 5, 6). After His resurrection He gives His disciples a world-wide commission to all the Gentiles; and in due time the Holy Ghost came down baptizing both Jew and Gentile into one body, one new man. Thus and then was revealed that mystery hid previously in God, now made known to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. Such is the Church of God, Christ's body. Not a syllable in 1 Corinthians 10 intimates that the Old Testament fathers were members of it. Nobody denies that believers among them were saints, looking for Christ and regenerate of the Spirit; but where are they called Christ's body, or said to be baptized by the Holy Ghost? The writer does not see that there may be many blessings common to the faithful at all times, and a new corporation formed from among the redeemed within given limits for the glory of God. This cannot be determined *à priori* or on vague general grounds. It would be wiser to weigh the alleged proofs, and above all the Scriptures. Indeed it is a more logical inference from 1 Corinthians 10 that the Jewish fathers could not have essential *identity* with us, because the apostle says these things happened as "types" of us. For a type suggests *resemblance*, and not, as he contends, identity with the antitype.

So Hebrews 11, to which he next appeals (p. 902), concludes with a verse remarkably adverse to the notion that they and we form one body; for the words he cites expressly teach that God has provided a *better thing* for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. Instead of being perfected in resurrection glory, when the Lord came and wrought redemption, they had to wait for us who are called to partake of the heavenly calling. (Chap. 3) When we have all got our "better thing," they will be perfected (not apart from but) with us. That is, the verse teaches with equal distinctness that God has foreseen some better thing as to us, and that we and they are to be perfected together; but not a trace appears of the union of them and us in one body. Hebrews 12: 23 *distinguishes* between the spirits of just men made perfect (the Old Testament saints), and the church of the firstborn.

Again, if Stephen treats of Moses being ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ with the angel that spoke to him in Mount Sinai and the fathers, Pearson and Alford will, with the "Brethren," correct his error, and tell him that it was the assembly of Israel in the wilderness, not the one body of believing Jews and Gentiles. Will he be bold enough to say that the Bishop and the Dean were "utterly obfuscated by their sectarian theory?" He ought to be more cautious, and not scandalize his evangelical magazine by abusing too strongly men far more instructed and able than himself, when letting out against the "Plymouth Brethren."\* It is to be presumed that some of its readers are decently acquainted with common Anglican divinity.

\* It may be worth while to add that among men of known ability and of every ecclesiastical shade, even of some as far as possible from "Brethren" and of others on the evangelical platform, there is no hesitation in coming to the same conclusion as I do on Acts 7: 38. There is this slight difference that some, as Grotius, contend for the congregation of Israel in general, while others, as Kühnöl, think that it means that particular assembly of Israel which gathered at Sinai when the law was given. But I do not know a single person of weight who does not accept one or other of these shades of the same thing, without a word about the inference which the Christian Observer seems to think everybody holds except "the Brethren." This is the more remarkable, because most of these writers held the usual loose traditional view of the Church as the aggregate expression of God's people from first to last. Yet they were faithful enough to Holy Writ not to force this verse to say what it was not intended to convey. Thus Schleusner says on the expression here, "concio Israelitarum, ad audiendam legem convocata;" and Dr. Hastings Robinson in his monograph (Πράξεις τῶν Ἀποστόλων, Cantabr. 1824) differs not from others: "Sermo est in h. 1. de certa quadam populi concione, qualis illa fuit in promulganda lege ad montem Sinai congregata." Meyer (Krit. exeget. Kommentar, Göttingen, 1835, in loc.) takes the same view, as does Bloomfield. The truth is that the word ἐκκλησία in itself determines nothing, as

being applied, even in the book of the Acts alone, in three senses, Jewish, Gentile, and Christian: — first, the assembly in the wilderness; secondly, the assembly at Ephesus; and thirdly, the assembly whether in Jerusalem, etc., or absolutely. It is the context which decides either by some particular qualification or by the general bearing.

Nor does the writer perceive that the argument here surrenders the citadel. Christ, says he, "as 'the angel of the covenant' was in the Church in the wilderness," as Stephen says (Acts 7: 38), before He actually became its human Head, because His incarnation was an anticipated fact in the divine purposes. He existed *in posse* before he existed *in esse*, as the logicians say." (P. 903.) This bit of logic is unfortunate. For Scripture speaks of the Church as the πλήρωμα or complement of Christ, never of the glorified Head as the fulness of the Church. It is *our* point in opposition to the *Christian Observer* that Christ's headship of the Church was only *in posse*, not yet *in esse* till the basis not of incarnation only but of redemption. It is now confessed that it was not *in esse*. This is a fatal admission: for that which wants a head is not a body but a trunk or a monster. Scripture never speaks of the body before the head but rather as following it. Thus, Ephesians 1 tells us God raised up Christ from the dead and set Him in heaven, "and gave him to be head over all things to the church which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." So the figure of the building in Ephesians 2 where Christians are said to be built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone. Was the building begun before the foundation was laid? Our question is one of fact, not of the counsels of God, who of course sees the end from the beginning. Were the question about the existence of Adam and Eve (who set forth the mystery as to Christ and the Church), what would be thought of the argument that Adam and therefore Eve existed *in posse* in the dust of the ground on the fifth day?

Again, there is nothing about that one body, the Church, in Hebrews 13: 8, or in Matthew 21: 43. One text speaks of the unchangeableness of "Jesus Christ;" the other intimates the rejection of "that generation" which refused Him, and the passing of God's kingdom to a nation producing the fruits of it. What has either to do with the question whether those before and after Christ form one and the same body? This is not reasoning, still less Scripture; but a mere popular notion without Scripture as to those before Christ, and against Scripture as to those since Christ. It is a tradition, founded on grounds which real scholars of his own and all parties explode as untenable. Indeed any Christian can judge for himself.

The motive too which he imputes (pp. 902, 903) is his own fancy, and contrary to all our thoughts and words. If he in the least understood our principles, he would see that to constitute a peculiar church of ours is quite foreign to us. We object to making a church, as much as to the churches, so-called, other men have made. We insist on the truth that God made, and intended there should be according to His blessed will and word, but one Church — not, of course, denying any number of assemblies locally severed, but all Christians forming one assembly, *the* assembly here on earth; all enjoying one Head above and one Spirit below; all joined into one body, so that a member of Christ should be a member of the assembly everywhere; and similarly His gifts of ministry. (1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4.) Such was the fact in apostolic times: Scripture recognizes no other doctrine or practice. "Brethren" only recall believers to the Church God *has* made, of which they and we *are* already members, and entreat them to cast away the worn and soiled cloths as well as the new fashions of human texture, and to cleave simply to what is of God's word and Spirit.

Next, we come once more to 1 Corinthians and the *Christian Observer's* never failing misstatement as to both Scripture and ourselves. 1. *It is not true* that this is "the stronghold of 'the Brethren.'" Of course, we believe it to have divine authority over us and all Christians; and it is ridiculous to evade the fact that we are really seeking, cost what it may, to act on it, and that our

brethren, Anglican and Dissenting, are not. *All* Scripture, nothing less, is our stronghold.

2. *It is not true* that, "because they find at the beginning of this the expression, 'the church of God which is at Corinth,' they conclude that that, as set in order by the apostle, must have been intended to be a pattern church." We see and say that there is admirable harmony between the address and the contents of the epistle; but we conclude that it is the most largely ecclesiastical, and therefore the most instructive on such matters, from the plain fact (deny it who can?), that it enters into questions of the sort, not only more than any other epistle, but more than all other epistles put together. At Corinth the spirit of schism and party displayed itself early. (1 Cor. 1.) Here the wisdom of the world soon claimed to adorn the doctrine of the cross. (1 Cor. 2.) Here schools of doctrine quickly found mutually opposed votaries. (1 Cor. 3.) Here apostolic authority was widely despised for teachers who allowed the world and flattered the flesh. (1 Cor. 4.) - Here gross practical evil was winked at, as if the christian assembly were not competent and responsible to put away known evildoers. (1 Cor. 5.) Here was seen readiness to neglect brotherly arbitration for the world's decisions, forgetting the grace of rather suffering wrong than compromising the love and glory of Christ; here too moral laxity was an especial snare. (1 Cor. 6.) Here difficulties as to marriage, as to the unmarried, as to widows, and as to slaves, required solution. (1 Cor. 7.) Here questions of communion and conscience as to idols, temples, and things sacrificed, demanded an answer, and his own ministry to be vindicated, however he might have waived its rights; for such was his joy and glory. (1 Cor. 8, 1 Cor. 9, 1 Cor. 10.) Here the order as to women, even in points of external decorum, had to be laid down; and also the right mode of celebrating the Eucharist is given. (1 Cor. 11) Here the operation of the Holy Ghost with a view to the common profit of the assembly had to be explained; and this, not in view of any local need only but of the Church as such everywhere on earth; for it was not in any one church but in the christian assembly as a whole that God set, first, apostles; secondly, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles; then gifts of healing, etc. (1 Cor. 12.) There too after the sweet episode on love in 1 Cor. 13. (how needful in such things!), the apostle had to regulate the exercise of the manifestations of the Spirit, especially for the assembly when they came together. (1 Cor. 14.) Again, after the assertion of resurrection against gainsayers as a foundation truth — not merely the soul's immortality but the rising of the dead (1 Cor. 15.), he lays down the general principle and method of collections for the poor saints, and treats of the various ways of divine grace in the service of Christ here below. (1 Cor. 16.) I have but sketched the salient features, as the chapters pass before the mind's eye: but where can one match these inimitable church canons? Still none that knows the value of what is "written again" thinks of making any spot *the* stronghold, or any church exclusively a pattern church. There is not even the shadow of an excuse for either misrepresentation. What can one think of a man who, when his mistake is corrected and contradicted, simply repeats it without a word or fact adduced as an excuse for his obstinacy?

3. Who ever dreamt that "the Church of God was to be found only at Corinth, because this expression is used" in the address? Nobody but the *Christian Observer* in its rash efforts against the "Brethren."

4. It is *not* a gratuitous assumption but a necessary consequence of the inspired character of 1 Corinthians, that "what is there written respecting the Church" is obligatory on every assembly which claims to be on the ground of God's Church. *Human* churches may take or leave what they like, or do not like, out of this or any other epistle. How striking it is that the very address of this epistle, from which they try to escape (sometimes under the subtle excuse of their deference to other epistles or churches!), is not merely to the Church of God at Corinth, to the sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, but "with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours."

5. Is it honest to say that "the apostle speaks of several things as *exceptional*, or only of *temporary* purpose?" This may be convenient to a defender of present things in Christendom; but why not specify? It is true that the apostle corrects their mingling of a feast with the Lord's Supper; but if he enjoins anything exceptional or temporary, why not say what? If the allusion be to miracles, tongues, etc., it seems to me unworthy of a grave man. His directions as to these things abide, just as his injunctions to a Timothy or a Titus. If such powers exist at any time, they must submit to the apostolic order; and if any man have the authority from God of a Timothy or a Titus, they can appoint and govern as their predecessors did — nay, they are bound so to do. But there seems rather more care taken to assert the general value and authority *ecclesiastically* of 1 Corinthians than of any other epistle, if one may judge from such passages as chapter 1 Cor. 1: 2; 1 Cor. 4: 17; 1 Cor. 7: 17; 1 Cor. 11: 16; 1 Cor. 14: 37. Does not this peculiar provision seem meant to guard souls from that prevalent unbelief of which the *Christian Observer* is here the exponent?

6. "And if that Church were designed to be made the model for all Churches, in all countries, and in all ages, the epistle to it ought obviously to have been the very first epistle St. Paul wrote. But the First Epistle to the Church of the Thessalonians at least is of earlier date; so is that to the Galatians; and that to the Romans is coeval if not somewhat earlier." The argument has no force, laying aside the irreverence of dictating to God the order in which He ought to reveal His truth, which lies at the bottom of it. But, in fact, no objection can be more worthless. For there is evident propriety in the Epistles to the Thessalonians taking the priority in time of all others. They develop christian life in its fresh simplicity and in its capital elements of faith, hope, and love, though correcting specially certain errors into which they fell or were misled in the great article of our hope, and insisting on the moral duties which suit that hope, instead of being incompatible with it, as some vainly supposed. There is no niche which these epistles could so well fill as that in which the Spirit of God was in fact pleased to put them — an initiatory instruction and exhortation to an infant assembly. The date of Galatians is the least ascertainable of all Paul's epistles, some making it first, some last, and many viewing it as intermediate. There is no sufficient reason to postpone it till the apostle's visit to Rome, as the legendary subscription in the common Bible does, followed by not a few names of weight. I do not even contend for its being so late as the Epistle to the Romans, which was certainly written at Corinth long before he saw Rome, but after the First Epistle to the Corinthians was written from Ephesus, and even after the second was written somewhere in Macedonia, before his stay of three months in Greece, when and whence he wrote to the Romans. But, supposing that the Epistle to the Galatians could be proved to be anterior to 1 Corinthians, contrary to the recent investigation of Prof. Lightfoot, what would be the value of the argument? Who can fail to see that to deliver saints from abandoning grace for the law (which is the point in Galatians) is an individual appeal of the most urgent personal importance, and therefore might well precede the laying down of the divine will as to corporate privileges and responsibilities? But the truth is, that the measure of uncertainty which hangs over the place and time of writing to the Galatians suits exactly. The aim was their recovery from a lapse into Judaising, which might have been either before or after or along with 1 Corinthians. But the Epistle to the Romans was assuredly written in Corinth during the apostle's brief stay in Achaia, after both Epistles to the Corinthians were written and despatched. The *Christian Observer* therefore is all abroad in the alleged facts: but had these even been correct, the desired conclusion would not follow.

In a former reply it has been already shown that a model place is not given to the Corinthian assembly more than to any other which the apostle planted or wrote to. We go on the broad ground that the same substantial principles were in force everywhere, that all the assemblies of God recognized the same fundamental truths as to communion, the same exercise of gifts and discipline, the same administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper:- all this because the Church is one body, the

habitation of God through the Spirit. Scripture is fatal to the present condition of Christendom. Our critic somehow must get rid of the authority that condemns it all. Is not this the aim of the following remarks? "The apostle of the Gentiles seems to have had no idea of conforming the churches, as established in different countries, among people of different habits, to exactly the same type. That would have been *Judaism* indeed. There is a certain pliancy in Christianity in this respect. The churches planted by the apostles were, so far as we can discover, differently endowed as to gifts, and so they had prescribed for them different rules of action. (!) The Plymouthites admit that the age of miracles has passed away, so far as the supply of 'apostles and prophets' is concerned. By what kind of logic, then, can they contend for its permanence in the supply of 'evangelists, pastors, and teachers?' If the Plymouth Brethren can exhibit the miraculous gifts possessed by the Corinthian Christians, we, for our part, will not object to their acting by the same rules; but to enforce the rules for their exercise, where the gifts do not exist, would be obviously Pharisaic and foolish. The laws of the first creation of the world were exceptional: the laws of its continued existence are fixed and uniform. Is not the same true of the Church?" (Pp. 903, 904.) Now it is no question of detail, nor of the presence of this or that particular gift in this or that particular assembly. The truth is, not that Brethren contend for some one out of the scriptural churches as a model (for we are convinced that they were all essentially alike as to constitution, *the Church* in fact), but that our adversaries want no model whatever from Scripture. And no wonder.

I utterly deny the ground of the reasoning. Differences in the measure of supply, varying displays of power, there were in apostolic days, yet there was one divine system which then pervaded the entire christian profession, founded not only on a common relationship to Christ but on the presence and operations of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. This then is the true question: Does that relationship still subsist for faith to act on? Is that divine Person still present here below to guide those who desire the honour of Christ in obeying God's word? Let others gainsay not only that it remains but that it ever was true, and thus in vain deny their responsibility and their guilt. May "Brethren" in their weakness have grace to hold fast the word of the Lord and not deny His name! It is not true that all the gifts described in 1 Corinthians are gone, because miracles and tongues are no longer. Does the *Christian Observer* doubt that God any longer sets in the Church teachers (1 Cor. 12.)? That He still makes His presence felt in His assembly (1. Cor. 14.)? There have been Anglican bishops and archbishops who, spite of their system, fully allowed that the prophetic (not predictive) gift is not extinct, and who yearned and contended for the liberty of exercising it; and this on the same ground of 1 Corinthians 14. as "Brethren" take. So far is this chapter from being limited to miraculous displays, that the apostle forbids the exercise of a tongue unless some one could interpret it for the edification of the assembly. Such was the grand aim of all — common edification, and this in order and decency. But the order is that of the christian assembly open to the action of the Holy Ghost through its members — an order undoubtedly believed in and acted on by "Brethren." Will the *Christian Observer* dare to say it is obsolete? Will they say that no gifts, not even teachers, exist, because tongues, etc., are passed away? "Laws of creation" is mere clap-trap which can only mislead. God created all things by the Son, by whom too all things subsist. He formed the christian assembly which can never depart from His word given to regulate it, save sinfully.

It is true that it was pre-eminently Paul's province to lay down the authoritative regulation of these matters; but God took care to affirm precisely identical principles by the great apostle of the circumcision. So we read in 1 Peter 4: 10, 11, "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and

ever. Amen." This unquestionably supposes the most absolute openness for the Spirit's action in the free working of every gift from the Lord. Not even an apostle, still less the elders or bishops, thought of silencing the lesser gifts. There was room for all, great and small. Nor were gifted men merely at liberty to employ what was given them for the good of souls; they were *bound* to minister to one another, as good stewards of God's various grace. Otherwise God would not be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. Flesh might take advantage of this; but no human restriction can afford a remedy: on the contrary it aggravates this evil, introduces others, and in itself outrages God's revealed will. The trite guard lies in the conscience exercised before Him and subject to His word. Hence the exhortation of James (James 3: 1), "My brethren, be not many masters [teachers], knowing that we shall receive greater judgment." The abuse of gift was in no way peculiar to Corinth, but the very abuse, whether in one place or another, demonstrates what was the sanctioned principle of God which required the warning, and this where no sign-gift is spoken of, but only such a gift as abides still for the edification of Christ's body. If indeed the *Christian Observer's* view is that no such gifts as evangelists, pastors, and teachers, are still given by the Lord, if they are obliged to substitute for them the scanty mathematical or classical lore possessed by the ordinary graduates of a university, and the common-places of divinity required by an examining chaplain, one can understand that much of Scripture ceases to apply either in principle or in practice. It is for the believer to judge between us and our adversaries. We hold that every spiritual gift needed to call in souls and build them up is still provided by our living Head; and consequently that the Scriptures which treat of this subject are as applicable and binding as in the day they were written. Whose logic is at fault? Whose principles make Scripture a dead letter?

It is remarkable that the principle for which men now contend was anticipated by the Corinthians, and is for ever condemned in this very chapter 14 of the first epistle. The Corinthian brethren also wished a certain "pliancy" in their church. They saw that some of their females were endowed with gifts. Why should people of habits so different from those in Judea, or proconsular Asia, be conformed to exactly the same type? "That would have been Judaism indeed." Surely the apostle of the Gentiles had no idea of conforming all in different countries to the same model! Has not the church power to decree rites and ceremonies? has it not authority in controversies of faith? The apostle of the Gentiles does pronounce on the case, but it is to put down with peremptory hand this licentious self-will which forgets that the Church, even on earth and though composed of living men, is a divine institution, and cannot be altered in its landmarks without rebellion. Did they contend for tongues in the assembly? Did they come together every one full of his own contribution? Did they prophesy ever so many on the same occasion? Did they allow women to speak in the assembly? These were abuses of christian liberty in the assembly, which must be subject to apostolic ordinance, instead of arrogating the title to please itself according to race, age, or country. "What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? If any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant." This is the alternative for the *Christian Observer* as well as for ourselves. Which of us owns and seeks subjection to the things the apostle of the Gentiles wrote to the Corinthians? Which of us contends for leave to give up this very portion of Scripture as of present obligation? Which of us seeks to originate methods of our own as the Corinthians did? Which of us insists that the word of God comes *to* us only (not *from* us as "a certain pliancy" would imply)?

As for the notion that it is illogical to contend for the permanent supply of evangelists, pastors, and teachers, if apostles and prophets be not now vouchsafed, I can only stand amazed at the extent of these men's incredulity as well as ignorance. Are they so far gone as to think that we must have either *all* the gifts the ascended Christ conferred on the Church at first, or *none*? Had we the miraculous sign-gifts of those early days, 1 Corinthians 14 forbids their exercise save under peculiar circumstances in

the assembly; whereas the edification-gifts were exactly in place and season there. Does this writer believe that we have no edification-gifts now? no evangelists, pastors, teachers? or will he boldly take the other side and claim the continued supply of apostles and prophets too? Nothing is simpler than that the Lord does not furnish gifts to lay the foundation when the foundation is laid; but that He in faithful love continues all gifts needed to build up the saints "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." (Eph. 4: 13.) If these divine gifts exist (as we believe) among all Christians, Anglicans, Dissenters, as well as ourselves, is it Pharisaic and foolish to enforce the divine rules? Is it not Corinthianism to seek other rules or no rules at all?

Next, as to Calvin's note on 1 Corinthians 1: 21 (p. 904), so far from being opposed to our views, few brethren have taught or commented on this epistle, as on others, without similar reflections. God is long-suffering and faithful; but a real assembly of His may be distracted by countless elements of sin, shame, and sorrow. The *Christian Observer* does not understand our aim, nor does Calvin touch the point. Since Catholicism swamped Christendom, which then broke out into the rival systems of the east and west, there has been no gathering of God's children in the power of the Spirit to the name of the Lord as their true and everlasting centre. on earth. The Reformation, which did so much for putting man in presence of God's word and proclaimed justification by faith, did not clear from the rubbish of ages the revealed truth as to the Church, ministry, worship, etc. On the contrary, it embarrassed the, ecclesiastical difficulty by giving rise to national churches, each with its own peculiar system of government, ministry, and discipline, independent and co-ordinate. This was pushed out yet farther by the non-conformists at home and abroad who claimed the title to frame churches of their own. Thus, the result was (not the Church of God on earth, one body, energized by one Spirit, with local assemblies doubtless, but the members and ministers in the unity of Christ's body, but) distinct bodies, Roman Catholic or Greek, National or Dissenting, with no proper intercommunion, only occasional or by courtesy, but contrariwise membership and ministry in a church, so that to be a member or minister of one is incompatible with belonging to another. What people call Plymouth Brethrenism is the recall of Christians to the original state of things in its essential features, as of eternal obligation and the only groundwork truly divine. We leave it with God to give this re-assertion of the Church according to Scripture that measure of acceptance which seems good in His eyes; but whether we convince others or not, our own duty remains clear, as it is our joy and, we believe, both glorifying to God and profitable to His children.

It is curious, however, that the *Christian Observer* omits in its citation the pith of Calvin's answer to the question what appearance of a church was any longer presented in Corinth. Let me supply his words, "Respondeo: Quum illi dictum esset a Domino, Ne timeas, populus hic mihi multus est (Act. 18: 9): hujus promissionis memorem id honoris paucis bonis detulisse, ut Ecclesiam agnosceret in magna improborum multitudine. Deinde," etc. The Lord's word that He had much people in that city sustained his hopes spite of appearances. Now, although satisfied Calvin did not seize the truth of Scripture as to much, any more than other great and good men of that day, yet I do not dissent from his conclusion that the true assembly of God in any place may be painfully afflicted with all sorts of evil in the members. 1 Corinthians 5 is explicit, as are other Scriptures, that it is not the amount of sin that may enter or spring up in the midst, but the refusal to judge, and the consequent sanction given to evil there which destroys the corporate title of the Church as God's witness here below.

The reader may gather hence how little either the Donatists or the Plymouth Brethren so-called are understood, classed as they are here together. "They are attempting what the Donatists attempted in the first century." (p. 904.) This at least is a discovery! I had been content to know with less pretentious

students of ecclesiastical history, that the squabble about the election of Caecilianus (A.D. 311) is the earliest point to which we could look as giving occasion for that famous rent in Africa. From the works of Optatus and Augustine I had learnt nearly all that can be ascertained about that turbulent faction. It seemed to be far more a question of discipline than of doctrine if not of party opposition, the Numidian bishops being piqued that they had no part as usual in the election. Felix, bishop of Aphthunga, who ordained the new bishop of Carthage, was said to be a traditor during the persecution of Dioclesian, and Caecilianus himself also was accused of ill conduct at that time. The elder Donatus who took part in the election of Majorinus, the bishop of the seceders, was the bishop of Casae Nigrae of that day; the greater one, who seems to have given the name of Donatists to the party, was successor of Majorinus. Spite of a fierce persecution, which Augustine palliated in the hope that it would be good for their souls, they appear to have gone on sometimes flourishing, and sometimes depressed, till Mohammedanism extinguished both them and the Catholics. Insisting on the rebaptism of all whom they received from their adversaries and refusing all communion save to such as absolutely broke off spiritual connection with others, they differed essentially from the so-called Plymouth Brethren. For we believe, that no ecclesiastical mistake, however grave in itself, calls for such stringent measures, and that extremities ought to be reserved for those who bring not the doctrine of Christ or connive at Antichrist.

But there is another discovery as to Scripture which rivals the Christian Observer's sight of the Donatists in the first century, and this in the very next sentence of the same paragraph. (p. 904.) "It is as clear as anything can be, that there never was 'the one body' in the sense the Plymouth Brethren would put upon the words, that is, a church consisting exclusively of true saints (?) in perfect unity one with another (?) since the day that the three thousand, along with the previous hundred and twenty true disciples, assembled with one accord at Jerusalem, and had all things common. The Corinthian Church certainly exhibited the reverse of this: and indeed, in all the apostolic churches, as described in the epistles, we find precisely the same evils, more or less, and still greater moral evils prevailing, than can be found now in any community of Christians. Are there no similar evils, even among 'the Brethren' themselves, with all their pretensions to oneness and to exclusive purity?" (Pp. 904, 905.), I know not how godly Anglicans relish such remarks as these on the dead as well as the living; but I avow that a lower tone of spiritual judgment it has rarely been my pain to meet with. Defamation of the apostolic church seems natural to those who apologise for Christendom as it is, and dislike the testimony to their own departure from God's word. Here every statement, every notion, is false. The sense said to be put on the words "the one body" is *never* given by us. We do say that none were received who were not accredited as "true saints;" but we always allow that our brethren of old, like ourselves now, were liable to be imposed on for a time by deceivers or self-deceivers. Such, however, are apt to fall soon into evil of word or deed, were they as clever as Simon Magus, and thus bring themselves by their manifest iniquity under the discipline of the Church. Next, it is a strange deduction from our writings to infer that our sense of the one body supposes not only the Church to consist of none but true saints, but these "in perfect unity one with another," since the same writer pretends that we count the Corinthians to have been the model for all churches. For the first evil denounced in the first epistle is their schismatical state, which forced the apostle to exhort them to be perfectly united in the same mind, just because they were not. Yet there are throughout more frequent implications that they belonged to "the one body" than in any other epistle; though, of course, the fact that such was their privilege is as often urged to correct their practical short-coming. See especially 1 Corinthians 10: 16-21; 1 Corinthians 12: 12-27. I do not hide for a moment the extent to which unwatchfulness exposed the inexperienced Corinthian assembly to gross evil, the remains of old heathen habits, or the effect of wondrous power at work among souls so little used to walk in self-judgment and the conscious presence of God. But there

is about as much truth or right feeling in the odious comparison of that church with modern communions to the advantage of the latter, as if it were said that the apostles Peter and Paul were not quite so respectable ministers as the modern clergymen of Nationalism or Dissent. The essential thing to remember is that the Corinthians had been really gathered according to God; and though Satan brought in exceeding mischief, still they were in a position and free to use divine remedies according to His word, neither of which features is true of modern communities.

As to the attack on ourselves, in the rest of the article (pp. 905-913), it is not for us to speak in self-vindication. We can trust God and are not careful to answer such charges; and the rather, as it is evident the writer knows scarcely anything about us. Others will and ought to look more to the realities of things, judged by Scripture, than to the thoughts and feelings either of ourselves or of our accusers. Mere vituperation has no force save for the weak and worthless; rarely is it the servant of a good cause. The question of Christendom is with the revealed word, rather than with those who cannot depart from that word knowingly, save at the peril of the soul and in opposition to God Himself. No dissenter who knows us will admit that we have their common, still less a special, dislike of the English Establishment. But, again, "Brethren," to maintain their position, "give us a new version of the scriptures under the title of a 'Synopsis of the Books of the Bible,' which is *their* 'Douay Version.'" (p. 905.) Mark the trustworthiness of the *Christian Observer* in common matters before all eyes. The writer must speak at random of what he cannot have examined, if he ever touched the works alluded to. For the fact is that the "Synopsis" is *not* in any sense a version of the Bible, though its author has also translated the Greek Testament into German and French as well as English. But the most learned men of the English Establishment have recorded their judgment of this English translation, which one of them, inferior as a textual critic to none in this country, recommended to his divinity classes. The writer can know neither the "Synopsis" nor the version; else he could not have confounded them, nor have foolishly sneered at either, as "*their* Douai version." Also, the "daring dogmatism" of describing the aim and object of each book of Scripture, is just what every annotator and every expounder does every day. The only question is, whether the work be done with spiritual insight, accuracy, and comprehensiveness. It requires no great penetration to see that the Epistle to the Romans, for instance, is not addressed to the assembly as such, but to the *saints* at Rome (i.e., in their individual standing) and hence, as in Romans 8, brings out their position very fully as "children" and heirs of God. 1 Corinthians, as we have seen, is far more ecclesiastical. He who denounces such self-evident facts as to these epistles may not be a dogmatist nor write mistily; but certainly he must dwell in a land of Egyptian darkness. Would he fain condemn us to the intolerant yoke of his own dullness?

Of the three anecdotes next given to illustrate the spirit of the "Brethren," I *know* that the two public ones are not stated truthfully. May one ask if the private case is any better? Is a monstrous tale against well and long known servants of God to be received because it is evil, though none among those acquainted with the facts feels the least need of contradicting it? Trashy scandal neither deserves nor needs notice, though some have a natural liking for it. Further, I never knew any "Brother" object to join in family worship conducted by Christians in a Christian manner. And I am perfectly sure that separating the wife from the husband, save for reasons which all Christians would hold as decisive, would never be tolerated in our midst. We have no controversy with our brethren as to such matters; and no man or woman guilty of such shameful impropriety would be allowed a place in fellowship. What can one think then of statements so reckless? or of those who deign to employ them for party or any other ends?

As to our "*essentially schismatical and sectarian spirit*" (pp. 906, 907), we have suffered not a little in vain, if we do not utterly condemn it, fruit, branch, and root. But how is it schismatical to

abandon all schisms, whether national or dissenting, in order to recur to the original and constitutive principles of God's Church? Is this what the apostle denounces in Rom. 16: 17, 18? Is the *Christian Observer* a true witness or a false?

It is observable too that, in excusing their own intolerance of our refusal to join in ways which we are sure are unscriptural, the *Christian Observer* avows its gross latitudinarianism. To us it is no matter of opinion but of faith to worship God as the apostolic church was called to do in holy writings still vouchsafed and obligatory. It is not charity to give up conscience, or to allow self-will, but this is the love of God that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not grievous. To talk about the wise and good of all generations is idle and false; seeing that every wise and good man knows that the original church action and worship have been abandoned for many ages in Christendom, and that the best and wisest of the reformers (e.g., those who laid the present basis of the greater Protestant bodies) owned how far short they fell of the primitive standing, and that many of them then and since contested these questions hotly with one another. There are ever so many different modes of worship in Christendom, which may all be wrong but cannot more than one be right. Why this rancour? Is it not fear or hatred of the truth that condemns them? "Brethren" felt that there was no use in owning one thing and doing another, and therefore necessarily left what was wrong in order to do the right thing according to Scripture. The Pharisees did not leave the religion of the day, but gave themselves proud airs at no cost in it. Would it have been more righteous or charitable to have gone on, owning our common defection from scriptural duties, but yet persisting in that which we believed to be sinful? This seems precisely what the *Christian Observer* thinks a more desirable course. Let christian conscience judge. We have learned that we ought to cease to do evil and learn to do well; and of course where such matters come before us, we lay this as an evident duty on all who see that they are in a false position but are disposed to tamper with a good conscience by remaining in it. Where is the "sectarian spirit," save in those who take fire at this?

I do firmly and openly tell all these defenders of Christendom against the authority of Scripture and the rights of the Holy Ghost, that God's glory is and should be the aim of the Christian, and not only the salvation of souls.\* I tell them that in vain they worship Him, teaching for doctrine the commandments and notions and practices of men. I tell them that for christian men it is of the utmost moment both for His glory and the good of themselves and their brethren that they should recognize and follow His will, as about other things, so about His assembly; for they are members of it, and so much the greater is their condemnation if they (through tradition, prejudice, haste, or any other cause) neglect that which so intimately concerns both Him and them. He who truly believes in the Saviour but does not understand the assembly of God, or his own responsibility in respect of it, will not be lost; but the man who treats a matter which runs through a vast part of the New Testament so lightly as to class it with "foolish and unlearned questions," is bolder than one ought to be with the divine truth he does not see, as he will learn to his cost in the day that is fast approaching.

\*"It is not salvation of their souls only he [Mr. Kelly] plainly tells them, they ought to consider, but the unalterable plan, *which*, according to him, God has laid down for His Church, or 'the Assembly.' This is made by him an Article of the Faith. He has got so possessed with his own figment about the Church, (for a mere figment it is, as we have shown) that this fills the whole sphere of his imagination and constitutes, in fact, his creed which he would constrain all others to adopt as essential to their Christianity. If he could show us the place in Scripture, where it is written. 'He that believeth not this shall be damned,' we might be brought to listen to him ourselves. But we read in our Bibles many things which Mr. Kelly and others of his sect, seem not to see, such as 'But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes' (2 Tim. 2: 23.)" (pp. 907).

Do the readers of the *Christian Observer* think that its managers will damage any but themselves by citing 1 Timothy 6: 4, as if it applied specially to those they call "Plymouth Brethren?" I admit it is as close to or as wide of the mark as the rest of their diatribe; but it must be manifest to unbiassed men in their own community, that this sort of thing is mere rant. The apostle was denouncing those who sought to make slaves discontented with their masters, especially believing masters. Are "Brethren" men destitute of the truth who suppose that piety is gain? Others there are, most will allow, who lay themselves rather more open to the appearance of using religion and its service as a means of worldly advantage.

Among our logomachies they class objections made to the character of the English Liturgy, to language which confounds the believer's need of forgiveness day by day with the unbeliever's need of remission through the blood of Christ; and, above all, to expressions which cloud the great truth of the Spirit given to all Christians, with desires after greater power of the Spirit. I pity those who count these "foolish questions;" but our objections go much farther than any phraseology however beneath christian privilege.

But when it is next said that "they confound atonement with pardon on the conditions of repentance and faith, and make faith a mere assent of the mind to a fact," etc. (page 208), they assert what is directly opposed to truth. This, I should judge, was gathered out of a Methodist preacher's attack, or in article in a Wesleyan organ founded on it. Let me tell them that, without boasting of our knowledge, I do not believe they will produce one man, woman, or child among us guilty of that confusion which they so inconsiderately impute to us as a class; and that no man holding the Sandemanian or Walkerite doctrine, which reduces faith to a mere mental assent, would be knowingly received amongst us. We hold universally that faith is the soul's reception of a divine testimony by the effectual operation of the Holy Ghost.

Again, the *Christian Observer* must be strangely uninformed of the sentiments of Christians in general, if they do not know that some of the best and ablest men among the Evangelical clergy repudiate the mingling of Christ's legal obedience during His life with the ground of justification. We all agree that Christ obeyed the law perfectly, and that this was needful to vindicate God who gave it; but it is infatuation to think that this proves His law-keeping to be the *very basis* of the merit of His death as our substitute. These men, like others, are feeble in their apprehension of the divine judgment of sin and sins in the cross. The union of the divine and human natures in Christ's person, His sinless life, His obedience, were all necessary to redemption. The true question is, by what was atonement wrought? With what does Scripture connect our justification?

"Brethren" know nothing of imputed sanctification, which would really deserve the sneer which J. Wesley cast on imputed righteousness. It is false that such is our doctrine. Every man who knows ourselves or our teaching in any moderate degree, must confess that we insist on a holy walk, as Paul does, because we are under grace, not law. It needs no argument to see that "they that are Christ's *have* crucified the flesh" does not mean daily practice but the ground of it. Really the *Christian Observer's* grammar is very peculiar, not to speak of the doctrine. Do they not know that the aorist implies a single act, as opposed to what is continuous; or a completed act, as opposed to what is in progress? I do say that Galatians 5: 24 speaks of what is "done already;" and I defy any man to prove otherwise. Other Scriptures teach a process going on, but not this passage.

If the *Christian Observer* stands to this, there are more intelligent clergy and laymen who will join with those they blame. It is not a question of substitution alone, but of imparting a real life to the believer, everlasting life in Christ; so that they, possessed of that very life in Him, are called now to

walk in the Spirit according to the characteristics of His life in whose cross the flesh, with all its activities and issues, was judged. Is this religion made easy? Ignorance of Christ and the cross may so deem it, but nothing else can. Life is not a question of imputation but of impartation; and the believer, accounted righteous, has also life in Christ. This will show how far men are to be trusted (is it want of common understanding or honesty?) who talk of imputed sanctification as the doctrine of the Plymouth Teachers. It is only the misapprehension of the writer. We hold that the believer is sanctified through the offering of Christ's body once for all, and that, *besides*, he has to pursue peace and holiness (or sanctification) without which none shall see the Lord. What, then, means this senseless outcry?\* — It is unquestionably false witness, which is even more conspicuous in the next paragraph; where a "subtle and specious heresy," "very pernicious errors," "Satan's snares," "angel of light," open the way to a wholesale application of 2 Timothy 3 against us. Now is it not remarkable that the provision of the apostle against the perils of the last days (which is the real aim of the passage, and of evident bearing on that assumption which is so apt to impose on the morbid, especially on the weaker vessel) is precisely what "Brethren" everywhere press — the value of every written word of God?

\* Since writing this I have examined Mr. Mackintosh's tract, and I distinctly charge the critic with misrepresentation at the least. Mr. M. denies progressive sanctification to be taught in 1 Cor. 1: 30, 1 Cor. 6: 11; Acts 26: 18, and Hebrews 10: 10, *but he maintains it from* John 17: 17; 1 Thessalonians 5: 23, Ephesians 5: 26, and Heb. 12: 14. "Here (says he) we see sanctification presented not merely as something absolutely and eternally true of us in Christ but also as wrought out in us daily and hourly by the Holy Ghost through the word. Looked at, from this point of view, sanctification is obviously a progressive thing." (Sanctification: what is it? p. 19.) What can one think of the *Christian Observer*? It is certainly and inexcusably mistaken. But the note to page 896 looks so much like confusion that I am willing to hope the writer is inconceivably dull, not deliberately false. In August he said that we *twisted* 1 Cor. 12: 3, aiming at the doctrine that Jesus bore the curse of the law for us. (p. 610.) I replied (*Evangelical Organs*, p. 19) that the text was aimed at something *wholly different*, taught by a former Fellow of Exeter College, to whom we refused fellowship. Now, in the above note, he means to correct his error, but falls into the new and absurd blunder that the Fellow in question held that Jesus did not bear the curse of the law for us! Having already explained what he really held, which has no resemblance to this. I do not feel disposed to repeat a painful story.

I do not deprecate the violence of the *Christian Observer*, nor should I tax them with "uncharitableness" if their assaults were founded on God's truth. But they falsely accuse us of desiring or allowing liberty to the flesh, which is incompatible with giving due place to the Spirit and word of God, but may and does co-exist well with human ordinances, ecclesiastical creeds, and worldly plans of government, substituted for God's system of His Church. But they betray themselves in the next breath; for after asserting in page 907 their large allowance for differences in modes of worship as well as in opinion, in other communions, so long as all things are done in charity, they maintain in page 911 that "separation from a church like that happily established in this land . . . is nothing less than needless schism." This blind self-complacency in their own religious system (at an hour when its powerlessness to deal with Infidelity, Popery, not to speak of heterodoxy and wickedness of the gravest kind within its own borders and even in its highest seats) would be ridiculous, if it were not a fitter object for pity and grief. How often must one repeat that no amount of good points and persons can make an association to be God's Church, unless it be the assembly of those recognized as God's saints gathered in the Lord's name, and in subjection to the word and Spirit of God! This the Anglican system never was, any more than the various associations of Dissent. To meet on divine ground, of course separate from every unscriptural form, as far as we know it, is the aim of "Brethren," and the occasion of the *Christian Observer's* charge of schism, which to us seems no better than the blindness of prejudice, as it flows

from sheer ignorance. It is evident, moreover, that if Anglicanism were really God's Church in England, every species of Dissent would be schism, according to page 911, and the large allowance of differences of worship in other communions would be wholly unjustifiable, contrary to page 907. The fact is, that the premisses and the conclusions of this writer are equally and altogether at fault. Separation from that which is not God's Church, though pretending to it, is not necessarily to create a fresh sect (as some absurdly conceive), but an absolutely necessary condition if we would "endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Am I free to abide in a body whose membership and ministry I believe to be opposed to God's word? I might, no doubt, have continued a member of it, lay or clerical, like some thousands alas! even of real Christians, not to speak of others, who are convinced, like myself, that it is but a human politico-religious system, and not a Church of God, any more than societies framed on the narrow basis of some peculiar and perhaps mistaken ordinance, the denial of external divine institutions, or the maintenance of an earthly founder's plan. Do they really believe that subscribing Art. 6 absolves their consciences, either in using formularies they know to be unscriptural, or in not obeying the Scriptures as to the assembly, the Spirit's action there, ministry, discipline, etc.; in short, in never doing the right and always doing the wrong thing in matters that concern the Lord's glory in the Church here below? Tetzels offered indulgences for sin cheap enough, and yet too dear in result; but what shall we say of this evangelical license for a pliant conscience?

Further, I can understand prejudice steeling a man against the scriptural evidence we produce for the nature of God's Church, and the presence and operation of the Holy Ghost in it; but he who treats such a matter as a crotchet or a persuasion about meats or drinks (page 912), and not as a fundamental question for the believer and the Church,\* does not seem to me, I confess, qualified spiritually, morally, or intellectually to assume the place of an instructor in divine things. It is easy for such a mind to fling out accusations of "mental idolatry" and "singular obstinacy;" it may even appear loving and Christ-like to argue that the apostle classes us as the ἄσπονδοι, the implacables or irreconcilables, with the most wicked of characters. Does he think it consistent with this in the next and final paragraph (p. 913) to admit that the "Plymouth Brethren" have got hold of a good deal of scripture truth, and have, most of them, no deliberate intention of doing wrong; and (believing, as they easily can, that some of them possess considerable gifts) to suggest some sort of linsey-wolsey spiritual occupation in the English Establishment? With such dreary jokes (if a joke this part, or the whole, of the paper can be) in serious matters I have no sympathy. But I may say (with unfeigned respect and love to the saints of God I know, and the many more I can believe to be, in that system,) that from first to last more sorry specimens of a religious essay than these of the *Christian Observer* on the "Plymouth Brethren" it has not been my lot to find, even in a day when the press teems with productions which have not a grain of personal modesty, love to brethren, fear of God, or real knowledge of His truth. Did they design to expose themselves or to prove the value of what we have learnt from scripture, I doubt that they could do either more effectually than by committing a principal organ of the Evangelical party to attacks which injure none but themselves, and themselves in every point of view, with men of faith and intelligence.

\*Schism we feel most deeply, and sects (ἀἵρεσεις), a yet sadder fruit of the same bitter root of self-will, we have honestly sought at all cost to keep ourselves pure from. But it is the reverse of either schism or sectarianism to quit every confederation even of genuine Christians where the ground of fellowship is not, and never was, the name of Christ as the centre maintained in holy discipline by the Holy Ghost through the written word, and this in the unity of Christ's body. Our one desire as to this is to be gathered and kept thus, as the saints were at the beginning. Nothing but a spirit of obedience in God's children can give them to feel and act aright, withdrawing them not from God's assembly but from every substitute for it, and engaging them to follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them

that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. To accredit as God's Church that which really is not, being neither so founded nor so perpetuated, is not to avoid schism but to help on the mystery of lawlessness and build up the great city of confusion. It is manifest wickedness for the Christian to remain where he is if it be confessedly "only the world under another form." Under every form the world denies Christ, and the Christian is not of it and never should appear to be of it. Neither birth nor any other circumstance is entitled to bar the way of faith. And faith ever judges by God's word, not by what we see, and in spite of the bitterest reproach. Even the Corinthian assembly of old purged out the leaven and proved itself clear: what would have been the result, had they allowed the evil in defiance of the apostle's command? A leavened lump. The important point, however, is to bear in mind that the religious societies of Protestantism never were gathered on scriptural ground, any more than Popery, though of course very different otherwise.