

No.

108.

*"IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD."* COL. 3. 1.

HELP AND GUIDANCE  
THROUGH GOD'S GRACIOUS  
HAND IN HISTORY.

*An Address (revised) at*

FOREST GATE, E. 7.

August, 1913.

by

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HELP AND GUIDANCE,  
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Addresses by Mr. P. W. Heward,  
Forest Gate, E. 7.,  
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(PRAYERFUL perusal important. Let us FEEL the failures of God's people, including our own. Confession of sin is deeply important.)

DANIEL 9 read.

If, beloved friends, a believer who had only looked at God's arrangements clearly marked out in the Scripture, were suddenly brought into this wide and wicked city, what would amaze him? He would not only see the evil of the world, but one of his greatest surprises would be that those who bore the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ differed and were unconcerned about these differences, or, otherwise, quarrelled about them instead of being humbled before the Lord. He would be surprised to see those who professed the Name of the Lord meeting in different buildings, not for convenience' sake because there were too many to meet in one, but for choice! sake. He would see an empty (or comparatively empty) building with an outward gorgeous parade, and then would find other empty buildings near in many districts of this city. He would find, moreover, some buildings filling with those who gathered to hear social discourses, to listen to beautiful singing, to have a parade of earth's fashions - anything and everything but the worship of God. And all on which such an one, suddenly transplanted into this land, would look would surely suggest to him that there was a vast change from that which God appointed. Now this change has not come in a moment. Between us and the day of Pentecost there are nearly nineteen centuries. Evil quickly came in and evil spread. There were temporary lulls and temporary reformations, but the sad fact remains that the prophetic parables of the Lord Jesus have been most fully illustrated. The tares are mingled with the wheat. The mustard tree

of a governing Christendom is very manifest. And the woman has hid the leaven in three measures of meal, and the doctrine of God is almost all leavened. Truth has been twisted. In almost everything with regard to God's Book there are wide diversities of opinions. Take one or two simple things. Take the question as to whether a believer is saved eternally, or may lose his salvation and "fall away". You will find those who profess the Name of the one Lord contradicting one another on this point. Take the setting forth of God's own infinite grace causing that there are sinners saved out from every nation. You will find the majority of professing Christians defining that grace as God's reply to something good in man. Take the unveiling of eternal punishment. It is only a minority of those who profess the name of the one Lord who now acknowledge its reality, and only a minority of that minority are affected by it in their daily life. Take the question of arrangements of gatherings for God's people. You will find a large number asserting that Christ appointed and approved of Infant Sprinkling, a large number rightly asserting that He only appointed Believers' Immersion. Do you wonder that the man of the world turns away disgusted? The amazing fact is that those who bear the Name of the one Lord are not CONCERNED about these differences. Here is a standing disgrace AGAINST THE NAME OF THE LORD. It looks to those who gaze on as if the Scripture were a mystified book, whereas its utterances are plain to those who have understanding. As the last verse of Hosea puts it, the wise and prudent (not with earth's wisdom) will own God's ways, but the transgressors will fall therein. "If anyone will to do God's will, he shall know of the doctrine" is still the wondrous statement of the Lord Jesus Christ, and differences are not the accidents of circumstances. Differences are not the desirable variations that some would have us believe, but differences are the evidences of hearts out of harmony with the Lord. I do not mean only that those who hold almost all error have their hearts out of harmony with the Lord. Much truth can be held, and the heart still be out of harmony, for

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a large amount of truth is "held" among believers at the present day just as the Mohammedan holds his Mohammedanism, - he is trained to it. There is a mental grasp without a spiritual hold. Many things that believers accept, they accept ( even though the beliefs are true), not because God's Holy Spirit has convinced them, but because they have been brought up in certain surroundings. Beloved friends, unless truth holds us, unless we accept everything on the authority of the Spirit of God we are in a perilous position. Satan may wrest from us our beliefs unless God's Holy Spirit has put them there. These things should search us to our very hearts. Believers differing, believers arrangements upside-down, and so confused with unbelievers that you cannot say who have passed from death into life, and who are only worse than the foolish virgins - how solemn is all this! THE LORD knoweth them that are His, but we cannot tell except as those who name the Name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness. Man looketh at the outward appearance, necessarily, and even believers cannot judge of all the inward condition. By their FRUITS ye shall know them. Undoubtedly we can tell much of that which is within by the outside, but we cannot claim by inspiration to know the inside, and therefore we have to leave the greater number of professing Christians and say "I do not know if they are saved or not. THE LORD knoweth them that are His."

But the outlook, though dark, is brightened. Nothing has taken God by surprise. The ruin, though sinful, has been fore-revealed. It is therefore for us to seek a plain path because of those who observe us, humbled by the ruin, but not despondent on account thereof. God lives: truth remains: the coming of the Lord draweth nigh, and though the sects, systems and schemes of men exalt themselves against the knowledge of God, yet His counsel shall stand, and He will do all His pleasure; and by all manner of means (yet, in another sense, by the wondrous UNIQUE means of the Gospel of Grace) will He prove that He has a power unto salvation grasping guilty sinners in all manner of

surroundings, and bringing them to a saving knowledge of the truth, so that there shall not be one vacant seat at the marriage-supper of the Lamb, for Christ SHALL see of the travail of His soul.

To understand something of the present, and of God's will for us in the present, we must look back over the past. The Scriptures are full of History, and we may see God's hand in History. It is hard to read, not because it is absent, but because our eyesight is faulty. Some will tell us that the historical parts of Scripture did not need any inspiration. I venture to say that no perfect history could be written without inspiration. Anyone who has tried to write about history, or to talk about it, must feel the impossibility. Write your own autobiography, and you will understand what I mean. Every man has a bias, and that bias comes into everything, and bias is sin. O for grace to look back upon history more than ever from God's standpoint! We know that He has worked all along the ages, for He promised so to do, but HIS work has been largely unknown. There are many whose names are in the Book of Life who are not in the book of fame. God has had His purposes, and God has worked out His purposes, and not infrequently His saints have been background saints, and His works background works. CHRIST was despised and rejected of men. The national historians did not write His history. Search through heathen writers, you will find few allusions to Christ. When you find human writers, profane historians, referring a great deal to Christianity, you may begin to doubt if it is Christianity at all. That which comes to the front is oftentimes not of God. The work of God has a long history in heaven but a short history on earth. Christendom has many histories on earth, but from the Divine-approval standpoint only a few pages; ah, may we not say less than that? for it is like the nations "Less than nothing and vanity."

In olden times, before Christ came, God was pleased to work in various ways with Israel. He led them up out from Egypt with that wondrous strength before which neither Pharaoh nor sea could stand, and He brought them in, after meeting their needs

for forty long years in that wilderness of pits and snares and dangers. He led them in, but they rebelled. They had no king, but God was pleased after Joshua, and after the elders who outlived Joshua, to raise up judges. The Books of Moses tell of the law, and Moses' life is brought before us in four books. This leads to Joshua, and Joshua leads to Judges with its appendix Ruth, and then we reach a revival introducing the kingdom. Four books of the Later Scriptures give the life of a Greater than Moses, of One Who kept the Law. The Gospels lead to Acts in which we see the work of the Holy Spirit, Who as Joshua, led into the land, but when the apostles were rejected and the elders who outlived them passed away, there came a parallel with the times of the Judges. Thanks be unto God some of us believe that there will be a reviving, as in the days of Samuel, before the antichrist, (like to Saul,) rules, and we look beyond the antichrist Saul to the reign of the Greater than David and Solomon, Whose Kingdom shall never be divided, and of Whose Kingdom there shall be no end.

But looking back of history we must feel, that there have been weary centuries throughout, - the times of the Judges. The book of the Acts is the only Church History, and it closes abruptly, for the corporate testimony ceases. Let Paul by inspiration bear the witness! Somewhat later than the book of the Acts he wrote thus - "At my first answer (this was in Rome) no man stood by me". In the same epistle occur the words "All that are in Asia have turned from me". Corporate testimony in such conditions? Beloved friends, it is IMPOSSIBLE so to have it. The ruin had come in, but God's love and eternal plan were not ruined. Men tell us of the early "Church" in the second century. It was the early Christendom. The early Church is in the book of Acts. God has written a Church History, but men have written Christendom's history, and Christendom copies Christendom, but saved ones SHOULD copy Christ. And God is very merciful. He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed. If He had been pleased to say of His people

"They are joined to idols, let them alone", who could have stayed His hand or said unto Him, "What doest Thou?" But with a love beyond all loves He bore with them and said, as it were, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" His heart's love was toward His own, and, pitying them, as to Israel of old He gave judges, and as that book so named puts it "The Lord was with the judge". Here, beloved friends, we have a key to the history of the ages. Why is it that God preserves to Himself a little witness in those Waldensian mountains and valleys? The Lord has granted a little local reviving. Why is a Luther raised up? A Calvin? A Farel? And other servants of the Living God? The Lord is giving judges, and He raises up the judge, and is with the judge. But a Gideon made an ephod, and a Jephthah failed, and a Samson departed from the Lord, - so was it with these other men whom God used. We cannot imitate them altogether, nor can their works fully say "Imitate me, as I am an imitator of Christ", for, unlike Paul, there were many grievous defects in their arrangements. A Luther marred his testimony by a sacramental theory which removed God's teaching in the Lord's Supper. A Calvin marred his testimony by infant baptism, and by theories of the "Church" ruling the state. Many Puritans of the 17th century in this favoured land marred their testimony by engaging in wars and approving thereof. Some of them were persecuted, yet turned persecutors. In the 18th century God followed the revival of the 17th (from which there had been so fearful a reaction in the time of Charles II) - God followed up that revival of the 17th century and awoke many from stupor during part of the 18th by a wondrous Divine working. Thousands flocked to hear Whitfield: THE LORD raised up, as He raised up the judges of old. But the testimony of the 18th century was marred in the same way. If/<sup>one</sup>such as Whitfield excused the sad sins doctrinally, and in arrangements, of a Wesley, another emphasizing grace, and well known as a favourite hymn-writer, indulged in the wildest epithets against him, that bring one into considerable concern, when Matt. 5 is weighed. Thus the whole of the 18th century was damaged, as other centuries before. God raised up, as it were, judges locally, just as in Israel's time of ruin, there was Jair the Gileadite, there was Ibzan

of Bethlehem, and so forth. God has given at all times many guides in different places, but there are years in between them; there are years of captivity to a king of Mesopotamia, to a king of Moab. There is an up-and-down experience in Judges, even as there becomes an up-and-down experience in the individual life whenever one is out of harmony with the Lord in the heavenly places; there is an up-and-down experience, - blessing, failure, blessing, failure, see this throughout the book; and so <sup>has it</sup> ~~it has~~ been all along. 23 28

The 19th century arrived. Just at the end of the previous hundred years society had been rent, on part of the Continent, by that awful anticipation of antichristian power, the French Revolution, that awful type of the way in which in the future, religious profession will be suddenly changed to blasphemous infidelity. In this land God then brought before some the need of preaching the Gospel to the regions beyond, and others were becoming concerned as to gathering in accordance with the mind of God. Amidst the wars and rumours of wars which marked the beginning of the nineteenth century God was working, but, as a rule, man was, and is, prone to extremes. Those who were concerned about the heathen gradually went on to forget it is the Spirit That quickeneth; and some who were concerned about the gathering aloof from an ungodly world came to be so occupied with their arrangements of gathering that they forgot the separation from OTHER sins as well as those ecclesiastical. Particularly in Ireland were there signs of God's working some years before the movement that has been commonly known as that of "Brethren". Yes, some years before that, there was an awakening as to some arrangements after God's own heart in Ireland. There was a movement, in which clergymen left the Established Church (so-called), a movement in which there was a deep concern for what was called by one, the "Apostolic traditions". The movement became unscriptural on certain points, and the mistakes of one of its leaders overpowered those who were connected with it, and they followed him in errors.

I suppose at one time there were about 20 to 25 gatherings in Ireland linked with this movement which was BEFORE that which we connect with the name "Brethren", - 12 to 25 years before. And

soon came the time when God graciously caused some more of His people to be concerned about gathering on right lines in connection with that which afterwards became the movement to which I have referred as that of "Brethren", though it is difficult to trace all the chronology, or the way in which God was working.

Round about 1830, however, it is plain, God impressed the hearts of various of His people in DIFFERENT parts with the need for godly simplicity, - simplicity, not only in the matter of <sup>worship</sup> ~~worship~~, but in all things. We cannot, I have said, trace fully the history at the beginning. Doubtless those who were in it could not record exactly their experiences. Can you tell the way the Lord had led YOU, dear fellow saved one? - the order of events, and which part of truth He impressed first? Surely the leading has oftentimes been wonderfully complex, that, though you may thankfully see the results, you cannot understand all the paths. It would seem that particularly in Ireland and in the West of England at this time, some believers were stirred up to see the relationship between the blood of the Lord Jesus and the union of saved ones. The well-known words of a well-known tract doubtless illustrated this - THE UNION OF SAINTS AND THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB. At the same period Satan was working with his counterfeits. Mormonism was beginning in America with ITS ecclesiastical arrangement. Supernatural gifts manifested themselves in the so-called Scots Church, and those approving developed into the Irvingite and self-styled Catholic Apostolic Church, with its unscriptural ritual and saddening denial of the absolute sinlessness of Christ. The Tractarian movement in the nominal Church of England began at just the same period, and one can see in these events that the constitution of a "Church" was the thought prominent in many minds; and that when God had some who were seeking after unity according to His will, Satan was holding out false attractions to lead many to have a realisation on earth of their own idea of a gorgeous "Church". Where there is a work of God, it is sometimes apparently slow. The seed in the good ground brings forth fruit with "remaining under". God does not work with the rush and excitement that men would oftentimes desire, and believers whom

He was calling out from systems to the precious and worthy Name of Christ only saw things gradually. I suppose some things which to us almost seem common-place were great surprises to them. I do not mean that we are in every way so far advanced beyond what they were, but they were the pioneers, in God's mercy, and their influence has so spread that things which many evangelical believers realise quite easily now, seemed almost to stagger those who by God's leading first thought of them. The possibility of gathering together to break bread every Lord's Day without a president seemed an unwonted surprise at that time, and so was it with other things. The blessed hope of the return of our beloved Lord, as that which affects His people, and draws them from fellowship in the world's politics, and from the world's esteem - such a view of the Blessed Hope was surprising about 1830, but now it has become almost commonplace to us, perhaps too commonplace, dear friends. We need to FEEL truth more. I suppose one may make a general statement, that truth should be fresh to us every time, and almost surprise us again and again, because we see more in it.

Briefly one may sum up a few of the arrangements which were then gradually brought about, -

FIRST, - There was a meeting together of CHRISTIANS as Christians, not owning a human name. Any approved believer was welcome, to be regarded as a believer, and acknowledged in the expression of fellowship at the breaking of the bread. No sectarian "denominating" was taken or sought. The title "Brethren" has been given, but it was never chosen as a title, being simply used as a description, and those who fastened the name of "THE Brethren" upon believers who desired to meet as brethren were, consciously or unconsciously, acting unfairly and untruthfully. In the same way some might fasten on us the name of "THE Believers" and assume that we say others are unbelievers because we gather in meeting rooms we have sometimes described simply as "Meeting Rooms of believers" to avoid a human and sectarian name. You follow what I mean. There is a vast difference between the omission or insertion of the word "THE". If we put up "Meeting Rooms of THE Believers"

our meeting rooms would be sectarian, but the absence of the article makes the word simply descriptive. We do not say anything as to others, we desire to illustrate what it is to believe; we long that others may do the same.

To return to our history: in these early days when God granted a reviving about 1830 there was not a seeking after a NAME, but a seeking after the simplicity of children of God gathering together as children of God. Further there was a realisation in this connection that failure had come in, that corporate testimony had ceased, that the church of God, as the executive of Christ on earth, was not manifest, and therefore that the only position which believers could rightly take was that of humbly denying their greatness, and acknowledging the ruin, and meeting on the ground that God appointed of old, though without the power God gave of old, and without refusing to all others a position in the gathering of God saved by the blood of the Lord Jesus. In other words, the early attitude was that of separation from systems, but by no means a denial of the Christianity of those in systems. The gatherings of those who were in this movement were gatherings professedly on the ground that God had appointed in the first century, but there was no claim "We are the only ones". There was rather a DESIRE to acknowledge the weakness, to acknowledge the ruin, and to take a path of separation/<sup>UP</sup>to the Lord.

THIRDLY, there was a great stress on the privilege of seeking to break bread weekly without any "administration of a sacrament", without a president, in simple love to the Lord Himself.

FOURTHLY, there was much stress, as I have already mentioned, on practical living in the expectancy of the return of Christ. In connection with these things there gradually came along the thought that those who were outside evil should be more definitely united one with the other, that realising and recognizing one another were brethren, and meeting with the same object, there should be one discipline, so that the acts of each little gathering were to be regarded as the manifestation of the will of God, as far as that will could be known. Consequently one excluded from one assembly

would be excluded from all assemblies linked by a binding together closer than that which MEN have forged in some more elaborate, or apparently elaborate, systems and organizations.

Now, dear friends, having gone so far, I want to say a word or two as to where much of the failure came in. A large part came in, I am persuaded, through that which is common among us, and common among all believers, - a falling short of carrying out principles in humble love to the Lord, though realised in the heart. But I am also persuaded that there were certain failures in the principles which marked that movement. Shall we seek to consider one or two of the failures, not to criticize mentally, but that we may be warned against them, that we may be more concerned to become closer and closer to the will of God <sup>yea, to be in the will of God</sup> in all things. If we see that believers seeking to please the Lord have failed, how humble we should be, and how concerned lest seeing their failures we fail also. First I believe that there was a large amount of failure through a misunderstanding of the work of the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God undoubtedly caused certain supernatural gifts in the early Church, but in the absence of those supernatural gifts, partly withdrawn because of chastisement, - in the absence of those supernatural gifts we cannot pretend that we have them without grieving God. The gathering in 1 Cor. 14 is marked by inspired speakers, and inspired speakers only. We cannot pretend that we have inspired speakers now. We cannot pretend, therefore, to meet exactly in the same way as 1 Cor. 14. That the Holy Spirit COULD lead believers to rise up and speak without premeditation, that the Holy Spirit could work by seven as easily as through one or two, is perfectly clear, but that the Spirit of God is pleased so to do in days of ruin, is not clear. Rather we have the stress on more individual ministry in days of weakness. We do not find in the epistles to Timothy the open meeting, though we DO find open prayer. The Spirit of God, even in 1 Cor. 14, is not spoken of as presiding in the assembly in such a way that everything will go along rightly without godly arrangement. Even THEN, when the gifts were granted,

the words were clear "Let all things be done decently, and according to an arranging"; and believers were held to be responsible for the use of their gifts, and it would seem that those who had inspiration often came with their inspiration ready before they arrived at the meeting, - hence we read "Each of you hath a psalm", and so forth. Surely then it cannot be wrong, necessarily wrong, for children of God to wait upon Him beforehand as to what they should say when speaking at the gathering of believers in connection with the Table of their beloved Lord. We limit the Holy Spirit if we say He cannot work to prepare beforehand. We limit the Holy Spirit if we restrict Him to open ministry. The Spirit of God can work as He please. I am afraid there has been a limiting of the Spirit of God, though connected with a desire to exalt Him. Furthermore, - and with this one point I must close, leaving the rest for another time, - furthermore, there was the tendency to deny arrangement, to put on one side arrangement, yet "arrangement" would come in without being acknowledged. Now, anything that comes into a position of influence without being acknowledged tends to produce a spirit of untruthfulness. Christendom has its authorities and heads, and in this connection it is outspoken in its denial of the Lord's will. The Lord's people among Brethren (so-called) were oftentimes brought into a measure of system. A "Brethrenism" so easily comes in among us all, and this came in, and there was the employment of human arrangements without a satisfactory result, because they were not SUPPOSED to be there, and yet they were allowed. A unity of saved ones was desired upon every subject that came before the gathering; that unity could not be produced, yet government by majorities was held to be unscriptural; the result was a TENDENCY toward that which would produce untruthfulness - to carry out the principle of unity when the "apparatus" and power were absent. Men of God who had been thoroughly trained in the knowledge of the truth ~~truth~~ naturally took a leading position, and instead of fully acknowledging them, as Scripture appoints, there was the tendency to ignore this in word, yet the position was taken, and such a condition inclines to a MEASURE of untruthfulness.

Perhaps I should have said, when speaking of mistakes as to the work of the Spirit of God, that we all feel sure that a waiting on God which is acceptable because in Christ, is never a failure, but if we ever anticipate certain impulsive leadings, and are UNWILLING to prepare, we may lay ourselves open to be led by other impulses than those of the Lord; and I believe that the erroneous teaching concerning prophecy, and concerning other things which has disfigured God's work among the Brethren, was largely because there was a desire to be suddenly led. Thus other workings than those of God were manifest, not in the same MEASURE as in the Thessalonian assembly, but in the same direction.

All these things are a beacon to us. Let us praise God for all the love of all His people. Let us not proudly record their errors. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall". If those who have gone on the path of separation from evil because that is God's principle of unity, - if those who have gone on the path of seeking to be outside the camp with Christ have failed so sadly, let us take heed, lest wandering from our Lord, individually or collectively, we bring disgrace upon His Name, and hinder as far as we can hinder the work that in His love He determines to do in making ready a people to welcome His beloved Son Whose coming is so near.

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GOD'S HAND SEEN IN HISTORY (Continued).

11th August, 1913.

I suppose, dear friends, that we all have various mental inclinations. To some, like to myself, doubtless, history is peculiarly attractive, and the history that we have before us this evening seems the most attractive, though likewise the most saddening, of all history. May we be preserved from mere natural interest in it. May it be our object not to criticize others, not to be acquainted with the dates of the different disruptions and disorders, but rather to find out a plain path in which we may walk humbly under the

guidance of the Spirit of God, because of those who observe us - and to the glory of God.

Last time we saw the difficulty of really finding out HISTORY in which we had not personal experience. We saw, moreover, that there was in the story of the present dispensation, a sad departure from God, but a parallel with an earlier age, for the God Who raised up judges raised up men like Luther and Calvin. Thus, amid all the confusion we traced, century after century, the good hand of God, and after other reformations we reached a reviving which, in some respects, stands out beyond them all. - refer to the reviving centred round 1830, and the beginning of the movement to which the word "Brethren" is now commonly attached. That at the first there was a movement from God, which still has MANY precious fruits, seems very plain; but that as of old the enemy soon sowed tares, is equally plain, nor is all the fruit precious. Moreover, there were not apostles in 1830, nor was there the beautiful beginning as on the Day of Pentecost, hence it was easier to sow tares. There were various preparations for this wonderful movement, and those preparations were doubtless guided by Him Who knew just how He would work, and Who knew the end from the beginning. The indirect results of this movement are very far-reaching. We cannot therefore realise fully either the causes or the results, but we know that there were certain beliefs which we desire to hold more fervently, and we know that there were certain failures by which we desire to be warned that we may walk more closely with God.

You will recollect that we noticed that there was a great stress on the union of saved ones, of those saved by the blood of the Lord Jesus, - a union, not dependent upon man-made organisations, a union not dependent upon trust deeds or creeds, but dependent upon the quickening and controlling work of the Spirit of God. I do not say that union was FULLY realised, but that union was emphasized. We saw, furthermore, that this involved an acknowledgment of the failure which has marked all

the centuries. Among many believers, or at least professing believers even to this day it sounds strange to say that the Lord's Supper was not kept for hundreds of years, but those dear people of God who were, in measure, revived in 1830, realised the utter departure, in some respects, which had existed for hundreds of years. Instead of regarding the history of Christendom as a desirable development, which is the standpoint of Romanism; instead of regarding the history of Christendom as a variable up-and-down experience, with a great deal of desirable development, which is, I am afraid, a fairly popular theory, - those who were then revived by God saw that the early church soon ceased to have its right position, and that the so-called fathers of the church did not understand church position, that it was entirely unscriptural to speak of "the early church in the third century", for example. One might almost call THAT a later stage of Christendom, for Christendom began its defiant departure from God even in the first century. You can well understand that the stress on the unity of saved ones involved the denial of many man-made unities, and thus contained within itself an acknowledgement of the loss. Thirdly we saw that there was a giving heed to the precious promises of the Lord which concern His return, and we marked, as well as this, a stress upon Christ's commands, at least some that had been forgotten, and together therewith a gracious emphasis on simplicity of worship, without priest or priestly administration. But we felt there were failures, - failures through not living up to the principles; like those which, alas, we still find among ourselves, and most closely in our own hearts. Oh how often we fall short of the truth we know, and fail to exemplify in our daily service! And there was a failure even as to the UNDERSTANDING of the work of the Spirit of God. His presidency of an assembly when gathered to break bread was assumed in a way which almost demanded inspiration. This was peculiarly dangerous when the older generation who had been trained carefully in the Scriptures, and had given up much for the Lord, were outnumbered by others. Furthermore, the idea of the presidency of the Holy Spirit, even in gatherings of two or three,

led to a verbal exaltation of local discipline as though it was almost necessarily an expression of the mind of Christ. A little company professing to act in the name of the Lord, and with the best intentions, might nevertheless be partly, and largely, the means of a world-wide division through the carrying out of the principle that the assembly, though small and without gifts of executive, was nevertheless able to register the Lord's decisions as to exclusion. In other words, individual claims of semi-inspiration, and collective claims of semi-inspiration were peculiarly dangerous, and apt to suggest and lead to certain pride. In connection with this there was the assumption that if the Lord could lead whom He would (which we all acknowledge), there would probably be a very open ministry (which, by the grace of God, we deny as a necessary inference). A peculiarly open ministry, without preparation, but waiting for impulse, was the opportunity for being misled, particularly as evil spirits are peculiarly zealous to overthrow a work of God, and this, I fear, is the key to much of the false prophetic teaching which has marred the sad and solemn history of the movement we are considering. Every believer who has some acquaintance with the Lord, and some experience of speaking, will know the danger of impulsive speaking, will know the tendency at the time to think a message is from the Lord. It is deeply important that we should never limit the Holy Spirit, but that we should considerably limit ideas as to our subjection to the Spirit. That the Spirit of God could work by EVERY individual in an assembly, in the way of speaking, we readily acknowledge, unless He had revealed otherwise; that the Spirit of God could cause all fresh unveilings of truth to come up in meetings without moment's preparation, we cheerfully recognise, but that the majority of believers are so subject to God the Spirit as to be able to enjoy these wonderful workings, we must sorrowfully deny; and further, we do not find Scripture to say that if believers were peculiarly subject there would be so many impulses as the dear people of the Lord among those known as "Brethren" have commonly assumed.

May I, in this connection, just mention one point that was put rather forcibly years ago to those in this association? It was said, "Why if it is wrong to prepare before the breaking of bread, wrong to prepare what one should say, - why if there is a danger and limitation in this, do you use a Hymn Book?" If there were thus any restricting of the Spirit of God, a hymn book also would be a restricting. I need hardly say from our standpoint, which I trust is in accord with the mind of the Lord, there is no contrast with God's will in a SCRIPTURAL hymn book, although a hymn book I take to be an acknowledgment of weakness. As to an early church it was said, "Each of you hath a PSALM", and so forth. There were INSPIRED hymns in the gatherings then, and a hymn book is always a sad acknowledgment. But the dear people of the Lord among "Brethren" did not realise the EXTENT of the failure, as we shall see in a few moments. Furthermore, the denial of organisation without the Lord's arrangement<sup>ing</sup> of the "organism" led to awkward positions, from which there was the extricating sometimes at the expense of principles; and when you try to twist things "to fit in", there is a dangerous lowering of the moral tone. The Lord's people among "Brethren" denied anything of the authority which they found in human sects: we likewise deny it. But they did not see that which, by grace, we have been brought to see, that the Lord has certain arrangements for guidance and direction in days of ruin. In the absence of seeing these arrangements they were cast back upon their idea of the Spirit of God leading, but as the Spirit of God would not always lead, though very gracious, when His plans were put on one side, they sometimes were brought to awkward positions, and they filled the gap in a way that meant leading and ruling, but without acknowledging it, and THAT is a danger to moral principles. Only recently one was speaking to me as to that with which he was nearly associated once, and he said "It is acknowledged that there is open ministry, but the Lord only leads these two", as much as to say "I feel that the acknowledgement of it is rather strange because it is so restricted". Now I believe that thoughts

of that kind have been in the minds of many, and that to account for them there has been a little unconscious dishonesty. From the standpoint which we see in Scripture, there is no difficulty in the matter, but from the standpoint that the Lord's people among "Brethren" have taken, there is a difficulty, - how without organisation, organisation/<sup>easily</sup>comes in, and how without leadership in the common usage of the word, there is often an under-surface leadership which is not helpful to the spiritual condition. I do not say that this is always<sup>s</sup> manifest in the same degree, but it is continually arising, through the failure to recognize GOD'S means and GOD'S methods.

And now coming on to our fresh subject, a few words about a general danger, which, beloved friends, applies to us. Heights of blessing are always near a precipice. They provoke Satan's opposition, and, furthermore, a blessing is often made an excuse for pride. If I put it this way you will follow what I mean. Earthly persons are "dangerous" in a heavenly position, and therefore if we take in measure a heavenly position, if some of our earthliness comes up, pride cometh before destruction, and there will soon be a failure. Now I believe that God did bless among those known as Brethren, but that there was a certain amount of earthliness in a heavenly position, and without the corrective power of continual communion with God, and of right arrangements in discipline, that earthliness sent some over the precipice. Further, another general principle. It is easier to have sections, and divisions, in a movement that wants to deal with sin than in another movement. I say this because the movement has been summed up as beginning with universal communion and finishing with universal excommunication. That summing up of it is absolutely false. The various divisions and splits among those known as Brethren, are very sad, but the absence of splits and divisions is no proof of a spiritual state. If you want to go on the lines of the Lord's will and deal with every sin, the probability is that there will be more splits and divisions than if you make truth a matter of small importance, unless there be a mighty corrective

power from God binding the hearts of His people, and preventing these schisms. The divisions among the Brethren are partly a healthy sign, partly an unhealthy. I know you will think that a very strange statement, because by the grace of God we see every division is a cause for sorrow; but, dear friends, keeping on a union in evil and in carelessness about truth is a greater cause for sorrow, because it shows a still lower spiritual state. I believe that many among those known as Brethren were sufficiently spiritual to divide, but not sufficiently spiritual to go a step beyond that. The reunion of Christendom is the ~~lowest~~ <sup>lowest</sup> level, and federationism is in it. The next step is separation, and all of us make mistakes in separations. The next step is to follow peace, etc., with those who keep on calling on the Lord out of a pure heart. O that that might be our experience! I do feel that we ought to be thankful that there has been sufficient desire to break asunder many lifetime friendships for what they believed to be more important. The divisions have been indications of an encouraging concern for the truth, though the MODER of the divisions has been <sup>an</sup> indication of a lack of walking with God, for the most part. Ah, again let us remember in studying this movement that the TRUE nature of ANYTHING is not seen AT ONCE. At the beginning of the movement there were godly men who had been thoroughly trained in various systems, and when they were trained they gave up for the Lord. They consecrated their gain to the Lord. That which was like to the learning of Saul of Tarsus, his Pharisaic knowledge, they brought over. I have not a word to say in favour of great human knowledge, but when a man whose mind has been trained in a human system adds to mental advantages the giving up for the Lord, the probability is that there will be blessings <sup>in connection</sup> with the step, which blessings are lacking when one who has neither training nor knowledge nor giving up assumes that he can speak just as well. The movement at the beginning was characterised by a vast amount of giving up for Christ. Furthermore, you cannot tell the nature of a movement till trouble comes. You never know what a brother is till you criticise him. "There must be divisions" said the apostle. WHY? That those

who are approved may be made manifest". This is not a pleading for divisions; but you can never tell how anyone stands till he is criticised. Rebuke anyone, and you will know more of his or her TRUE character. While there is agreement, it may be that the one whom you think to be agreeing with you is really very glad that you are wise enough to agree with him, and so there is not a true understanding of that which draws together. But let a difficulty come in, and you will soon see where there is a concern for God's truth in reality. But the difficulties also show the failures. How many, after some losses or breakages or difficulties of a material kind, put things right which they did not put right before! How many have made different arrangements after a building has been burnt down! But the arrangement would have been better first. The defects were found out in the ruin, and I think when the disorder came along among the Lord's dear people known as Brethren, there was a sad manifestation that something was lacking in their discipline to deal with those disorders. Furthermore, you cannot tell a movement at the first, because there is a temporary enthusiasm, - I trust we may have more than a temporary enthusiasm, - but you know what I mean, dear fellow saved ones. There is a vast amount of temporariness with God's people. There is a general longing to walk more closely with Him, but oftentimes we have a holy activity in a certain direction, and then that becomes a little cool. It is easy to start something fresh, but it is not so easy to keep on with something that was fresh six months ago, unless we know the continual fragrance of the presence of Some One.

We come now to consider one or two of the principles already mentioned, and to test them in the light of the Scriptures. Take, for instance, the question of the union of saved ones by the blood of the Lamb. Was that a Divine principle, or was it a man-made theory? It is deeply important that the Lord's people should be one. Christ died with this object. But the union of saved ones may become an ambiguous expression. How do we know who are saved? No believer without inspiration can dare to say. What they do we know? We know those who show they are saved. And how do they show it?

By disciple likeness. 2 Tim. 2 makes this clear; and the early believers among those known as Brethren took this position, yet failed to fully apply it. I would not speak of this simply as a matter of history. THEIR failure is OURS, their shame is ours, for we are all responsible for all others with whom we in any measure come in contact. The union of saved ones is deeply important, but we can only tell those who depart from iniquity. The Lord knew, and knoweth, them that ARE His. Therefore it becomes us to seek a manifest union of those who depart from iniquity. In other words, it is not sectarian to welcome only those who depart from iniquity, because it is Divinely appointed. If you welcome all who are "Christians" without taking the standard of departing from iniquity, you must accept them on their bare word. But who will venture such an awful risk? To build, as it were, into a House of God hay and stubble! There MUST be one way of drawing a line, or the other. Either we must say those who call themselves Christians, or those who definitely prove they are Christians. It is not sectarian to limit to the second. And I would go a step further. Those who depart from unrighteousness, and those who shew disciple likeness, are really the only ones who shew they are Christians. Till believers come up to the point of giving up all manner of things, including friendships, including religious associations, FOR THE LORD, they have not made fully manifest that they are His. In this connection may I mention the inconsistency of occasional communion. That is to say, one may be a member of a Wesleyan Chapel, and on the introduction of a known brother could be welcomed at the Table of the Lord, to return to his Wesleyanism the next Lord's Day. Occasional communion is a denial of 1 Cor. 10.17, etc. Its results are, moreover, very serious, for on the principle of Hag. 2, evil spreads. And the strange part about it is this, - that though the Lord's dear people among the Brethren would welcome one who had been among Wesleyans, they would refuse certain who had been among meetings more similar to their own; but in welcoming, for example, among Wesleyans, they would almost certainly after awhile be welcoming one who had been in fellowship with some whom they had

excluded. In theory, therefore, all occasional communion involves an indirect fellowship with excluded ones, which at once breaks down the whole teaching of discipline with which the Word of God is filled. I need not speak ~~more~~ about that, as it is our subject here next Lord's Day afternoon, God willing.

The union of saved ones, and the union of assemblies, was rightly realised in measure, but at least in name there was a tendency to overlook the important position of evangelists, to be used of God in linking these gatherings. The union of saved ones became a serious matter when a little gathering of half a dozen could act, and all other gatherings be theoretically bound by it. The union of saved ones is precious, and we should seek for its manifestation, but unity does not mean equality in executive. The Lord calls certain ones in days of ruin to exercise more of His discipline, and there is a danger lest, with a desire to emphasize the Spirit of God in each local gathering, the geography rather than the Spirit of God should decide the discipline. I mean the fact that there were just a few in one meeting, who were not instructed, would be made the opportunity for Satan's inroads. As to the weakness, our dear friends of the last century did not fully see this, for they met on the ground of the one body, assuming 1 Cor. 14, but in 1 Cor. 14 every speaker is inspired. At the present time no speaker claims to be inspired. Furthermore I think that they failed to realise that the Holy Spirit does not only lead us to wait for Christ, but He leads to some present REbuilding (cf. Hag. 1). The church at Ephesus was refounded after the ruin of which Timothy speaks, for the Book of Revelation comes AFTERWARDS, and shows that the Holy Spirit approved of a Scriptural church being FORMED AGAIN.

There was a tendency to emphasize the individual "Thou" of 2 Timothy, forgetting it is the "Thou" of one putting straight assemblies, not the "Thou" of the individual conscience, though undoubtedly there is a secondary application to this. I have mentioned a stress upon the coming of the Lord. In view of this there was much putting aside of earthly things at the first. Here was a large portion of the power. Men of wealth laid aside the glories of their wealth

and position. I have somewhat recently come across a lengthy tract, issued by one in those days - "Reasons for resigning naval rank and pay". Actions of that kind were evidences of a deep desire to give up "rank" and pay", not only "naval" for the Lord, - and believers still cling largely to "rank and pay", - and there is ALWAYS a blessing when they are willing to give up rank and pay for Him. The Holy Spirit was pleased graciously to manifest Himself, and the workings of the Lord Jesus in many ways amidst such surroundings, but as there became the failure of giving up, as there were counterfeits of giving up, as the love became colder, the movement became weaker. Furthermore, a longing for Christ to come largely overruled the grievous mistakes of prophetic teaching, - but not altogether; and those grievous mistakes, believing that the coming of the Lord Jesus was in its two stages SEPARATED BY THE TRIBULATION, led to much disorder, and to a lack of earnest preparation. "His wife hath made herself ready" is the statement of Rev. 19. Evidently, moreover, this wrong prophetic teaching lifted up hopes, and then, when those hopes were not quickly realised, there was a tendency to sink down, whereas a true spiritual grasp of what the hope of Christ's return is enables us to face coming events, and intervening events, with a quiet restfulness without being alarmed, even if there "seems" a delay, - for though NATURAL faith cannot understand intervening events, spiritual faith, and spiritual hope make no matter of intervening events, or of seeming waiting, for they look on beyond all to the Lord, and live in the light of That Blessed Hope. Oh that it may be ours to realise this in our own experience, through the precious teaching of the Holy Spirit.

Though there was a great stress on simplicity of worship, and the commands of the Lord, baptism was largely misunderstood. The opinion of one who took a prominent position seems to have prevented others from investigating this subject as fully as they should. Because he believed in infant baptism, to a certain extent, others seemed afraid to speak too strongly upon this matter. And you may be sure of this, when there are differences among teachers there is always the thin edge of latitudinarianism, and the ruin of

that devotion to the Lord which is concerned about the whole truth. Doubtless if these points had been pressed at the first, there would either have been a division, or a coming to one mind. I trust that we may press all points from the first, and rely upon the Lord to bring us to one mind. While our dear friends expected the Spirit of God to work marvellously in assemblies, somehow they could not claim that the Spirit of God would bring them to one mind on Baptism. Herein was an underestimating of His mighty power. Nor is this tendency extinct to-day. Within the last few years I proposed a meeting with one who is a publisher of one of the sections that have descended from the original movement, and he was afraid that a meeting to talk over these things would bring a display of temper. There was an unwillingness to trust the Spirit of God to keep His people's tempers. I am afraid there is a danger of one-sidedness. We need to guard against this. That believers among those known as Brethren have received great blessings at the Breaking of Bread, though done imperfectly, I would readily acknowledge. And why? Largely because they counted on the Lord for this. But if only they had counted on the Lord for a hundred other things, this address might not have been given to-night.

Furthermore, there were errors as to the time and mode of the Lord's Supper. As you know the traditional idea of the morning, and of leavened bread and of fermented wine, were still emphasized. Doubtless the Lord pardoned many who prepared their hearts (cf. 2 Chron. 30. 18,19), nor would we boast if we see anything more fully. Perhaps if they had not emphasized the weekly breaking of bread we might have been slower to see that. For all blessings through previous saints we give thanks to God; for their failures we would confess the sin of OUR people, as Daniel of old.

The removal of human forms and ceremonies was right, but as, alas, usual, when human ceremonies are thrust out, some Divine ones go, as well. The disciples' prayer was ousted from its right position, and in a protest against a ONE-man ministry there was a tendency to an ANY-man ministry, and almost to a denial that the

Spirit of God could use one. Furthermore, the protest against forms led some to an informality which quickly brought forth an appearance of irreverence, which in its turn produced the REALITY of irreverence. So, dear friends, we see some of the failures. I am not here to judge the precious motives of those who have borne the name of the Lord, and many of whom have now passed out from this world. Many seem to have known much love to Him. To their own Master they stood or fell in varying degrees as servants, but those who knew His Name because He knew them will be made to stand in that Day, and in any measure in which they sought after the Lord, and acted up to ~~the~~ light which He enabled them to see, they will receive their reward. We DARE not judge their motives. The tendency to fling moral charges has been marked throughout the whole history of those who are known as Brethren, - to use moral charges as a makeweight. It was so at least in several of the serious divisions which took place. I have, therefore, no wish to perpetuate this, and to charge them with untruthfulness and other grievous sins, but I must say that their words and actions have sometimes LOOKED like pride. We are, I think, entitled to judge actions. There has been a tendency toward that which has had the appearance of looking down upon those who are not instructed in the portions of truth (mixed with error), which became commonly believed among those known as Brethren. We all are in danger of becoming to SOME extent comparable with whited sepulchres, decorated, but full of dead men's bones. This is a call to humility.

There has been the appearance, furthermore, of a certain confidence among some, that (they had reached finality, and that none could <sup>lead</sup> them any further. I hope we shall never feel we have reached finality, till we do reach this when gathered with our beloved Lord. Then we shall not THINK we have reached it, we shall KNOW - in the glory of that day. As soon as a man thinks that he has reached a goal, he probably has reached a goal, but not a desirable one. The tendency is that there should, in this connection, be a lack of patience toward those who differ. That we feel, and should feel, the greatest love for all brethren, wherever they may be found, is,

I hope, in our hearts. We are all somewhat afraid when the word "the" is put in front, - "THE Brethren". I need hardly say, they did not, as a general rule, put this title themselves, although my experience of literature against them is that those who know nothing of their history, or very little of their true position, delight to fling such charges. In general I find that if I want to feel more interest in the Lord's work among the Brethren, the best thing is to read some books written against them. I agree with those maligned far more fully than. When I begin to read their own CONTROVERSIAL books, I differ from them very largely, because in their controversy they sink far below the level of the godliness that many of them experienced in connection with devotion. Those, therefore, among Brethren, whose lives have seemed to lay a stress upon "THE" Brethren, we pity, and I hope that "Brethrenism" as well as every other "ism" we hate. Alas! they have a history, and herein is the danger, because as soon as a work has a history it tries to produce a consistency with itself. Let us rather be concerned to have a consistency with the Lord. As soon as you have a movement seeking a consistency with itself, there will be some dangerous controversies and inconsistencies. O that we might be rather willing to acknowledge ourselves wrong than to work out theories of consistency that grieve our God.

The Lord's people among Brethren have laid stress upon portions of truth which we would value with themselves, but sometimes when anything is first seen it is not wisely expressed. I suppose every brother who first learns the portion of doctrine that concerns God's electing grace carries it to a relative extreme at the first, unless there is much carefulness before the Lord. In like manner God's dear people in this movement emphasized that the righteousness of GOD was not a legal righteousness, that a saved man was not partly under Moses, and in THIS they were correct; but when they shut out the one work of the Lord Jesus in LIFE as well as death, by laying such a stress on the death alone, that they forgot how in His life He was causing a righteousness to be made

available by His death, and applied to us in His resurrection, when they lost this thought, they were on an extreme. Doubtless there was a vast amount of legalism against which they protested, and doubtless the language concerning the imputed righteousness of Christ was often unsatisfactorily employed; but though we are of one mind with them to keep to the Scriptural word "The Righteousness of God", we see that the obedience of Christ, recognized by the Father, IS the Righteousness of God applied to the Lord's people. Not "Justification BY a risen Christ" (to take the title of one of their tracts), but Justification IN a risen Christ, - vastly different.

Again, their stress upon heavenliness of life was deeply important, but they were apt in speaking/<sup>of freedom</sup>from law, and ~~and~~ not being entangled in a yoke of bondage, to become rather excusing of the believer's position with regard to the COMMANDS of Christ. We ARE in a law to Christ, and this is deeply important with regard to His Coming Judgment Seat.

They emphasized "All ye are brethren", but they tended, or seemed, to forget the underlying principle of "Are all apostles?" They laid a stress upon "That Blessed Hope", and that every man's work shall be made manifest, but perhaps there was at least a slight tendency with some to under-estimate "If any man's work be burnt up, he shall suffer loss". O that it may be ours by grace, beloved friends, to avoid their mistakes, and to humble ourselves before God that we may know and do His will. We are living in perilous days. "The church" is an expression which is often misused. We know of old the Lord Jesus appointed and established the church, and the only established church we know is that of Matt. 16. 18 - "Upon this Rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not have strength against it". In the Divine purpose, and in a heavenly aspect, that church still exists, but in the early days it also existed on earth as <sup>a</sup> manifest executive of Christ. As such it does not exist in the ruin of to-day. But, thanks be unto God, it is possible to have the gatherings that will illustrate 1 Tim. 3 in some, and increasing, <sup>a</sup>measure, - "A church of a living

God, a pillar and ground of the truth". I hope our position is that we believe God has drawn us together here, that therefore it is a work of God; and let me say to every believer present, whether in manifest fellowship with the Lord's people gathered here or not, let me say that ~~work~~ <sup>ONLY</sup> that which is God's work has any claim on you. Everything else is a sect, and no sect has any cla\_in on you at all. You have no authority from God to build up any sect. You are perpetuating division among the children of God, and anything which alters any of the Lord's arrangements soon shuts out those who would keep to the Lord's arrangements, and as such is a sect.

I feel in this connection that we have a solemn responsibility to avoid dropping into a sect, and oh, dear friends, to avoid that which is equally dangerous, a sectarian spirit, and furthermore that which is equally dangerous, a low level of godliness, - for if we have high privileges we have deep responsibilities, and we realise that if God has taught us many things which others do not see, we ought to live more closely to Him manifestly than those who have not these privileges. To whom men commit much, of him will they ask the more. The Lord will act in like manner.

I put down on my notes "A tender appeal to any OTHERS present". If unsaved, oh how deeply important is this study of history, which reminds us of man's failure, but it does not say anything about God's failure, for He has never failed, and His salvation is as FREE in the 20th century as in the first, and though there is ruin in corporate testimony, there is still the one Gospel of the grace of God and salvation by the precious blood of Christ. And once more to any present who are in Christ Jesus, I would make an equally fully earnest, tender appeal to carry out His will at all costs. One of the greatest ruins of to-day, or helps to the failure, is this, - there are thousands of believers who see that many things are wrong in sectarian Christendom, yet they stay with the hope of improving them. But Let's seat in the gate is in the wrong position. Let us come forth to Christ outside the camp. It means bearing His reproach.

As soon as a movement becomes vast, with many ramifications, the tendency is that the movement should lose something of reproach. Beloved friends, to those who are gathered by grace in fellowship with the Lord's people here manifestly, and to any who are pondering the plain path in days of ruin, the words may sound forth "Bearing His Reproach". If any desire at any time to be gathered with us in worshipping Him, we cannot offer them prestige, we cannot offer them great things, we can offer them the reproach of Christ, to be thought peculiar, to be thought fanatical, to be thought mad, - the reproach of Christ, to give up "opportunities", to give up "friendships" for the greater friendship of the Lord, - little realised by any of us as it should be realised in the Holy Spirit, but a choice privilege which we want more and more. Oh that it may be ours to count on the Lord for everything, and to live, in a ruined world, DEVOTED UNTO HIM!

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