

Miscellaneous Writings of C.H.M. — Volume II

Scripture Inquiry into the True Nature of the Sabbath, the Law, and the Christian Ministry

Exod. 20 & Col. 2

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A SCRIPTURAL INQUIRY
INTO
The True Nature
OF
THE SABBATH, THE LAW.
AND THE
CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

"I speak as to wise men ; judge ye what I say."

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A SCRIPTURAL INQUIRY,

&c., &c.

IN resuming our lectures, for the winter months, we feel called upon to offer a few words of explanation to all such as may be desirous of knowing something of the doctrines held by those persons who stand connected, in any measure, with this service.

We feel that such persons have a claim upon us, to which we ought to respond, not for the purpose of vindicating ourselves, but simply to guard the truth against misrepresentation, and to remove, so far as in us lies, a stumblingblock out of the way of honest enquirers.

"Charity thinketh no evil;" and, hence, we shall not allow ourselves to think that any one could wilfully misrepresent our opinions; but it is a well-known fact that the most extravagant ideas are current in reference to these opinions; and while we can leave all those, who have given currency to such ideas, to Him before whose judgment-seat all must stand, (2 Cor. v. 10,) we, at the same time, deem ourselves responsible "to give a reason of the hope that is in us," and of the ground which we occupy, "with meekness and fear," (1 Peter iii. 15,) in order to meet those who may be scared away from the consideration of truth, by the fact that monstrous errors are attributed to the persons who profess to hold and teach that truth. We all know how prone we are to receive an opinion ready made to our hand, rather than take the trouble of investigating matters for ourselves, and comparing what is put

before us, not with our own or others' preconceived judgment or opinion, but with the word of God.

The Bereans were counted "more noble than those in Thessalonica," not because they consulted the decrees or traditions of the elders, but because "they searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so." (Acts xvii. 11.) Now, this is precisely what we want the reader to do. We want him to imitate the "noble" conduct of the Bereans. We want him to "search the Scriptures," with an unbiassed mind. We want him to form his convictions, not amid the darkness of misrepresentation and prejudice, but amid the pure and hallowed light which the page of inspiration sheds around him. We would affectionately entreat him to watch against a disposition to think people in error, merely because their position differs from his own. Let him seek for a dispassionate judgment, a calm, well-adjusted mind, a liberal spirit. In this way, if he cannot agree with people, he will, at least, refrain from hard feelings, and hard words, neither of which can possibly serve any desirable end, either as regards himself or others. To ascertain truth is the object of every judicious and reflecting mind, and this object should ever be pursued with a spirit freed from the defiling and withering influences of a narrow and demoralizing bigotry.

We shall now proceed with the special subject of these pages.

There are three important points in reference to which we are entirely misrepresented, namely, the Sabbath, the Law, and the Christian Ministry.

And first, as to the Sabbath. If it were merely a question of the observance or non-observance of a day, it might be easily disposed of, inasmuch as the apostle teaches us in Rom. xiv. 5, 6, and also in Col. ii. 16, that such things are not to be made a ground of judgment. But seeing there is a great principle involved in the Sabbath question, we deem it to be of the very last importance to place it upon a clear and scriptural basis.

We shall quote the Fourth Commandment at full length. "Remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore, the Lord blessed the sabbath-day and hallowed it." (Ex. xx. 8—11.) This same law is repeated in Exodus xxxi. 12—17.) And, in pursuance thereof, we find, in Numbers xv. a man stoned for gathering sticks on the sabbath-day. All this is plain and absolute enough. Man has no right to alter God's law in reference to the sabbath, no more than he has to alter it in reference to murder, adultery, or theft. This, we presume, will not be called in question. The entire body of Old Testament Scripture fixes the seventh day as the sabbath; and the Fourth Commandment lays down the mode in which that sabbath was to be observed. Now, where, we ask, is this precedent followed? Where is this command obeyed? Is it not plain that the professing church neither keeps the right day, as the sabbath; nor does she keep it after the Scripture mode? The commandments of God are made of none effect by human traditions, and the glorious truths which hang around "the Lord's day" are lost sight of. The Jew is robbed of his distinctive day, and all the privileges therewith connected, which are only suspended for the present, while judicial blindness hangs over that loved and interesting, though now judged and scattered, people. And, furthermore, the Church is robbed of her distinctive day and all the glories therewith connected, which, if really understood, would have the effect of lifting her above earthly things into the sphere which properly belongs to her, as linked by faith to her glorified Head in heaven. In result, we have neither pure Judaism nor pure Christianity, but an

anomalous system arising out of an utterly unscriptural combination of the two.

However, we desire to refrain from all attempt at developing the deeply spiritual doctrine involved in this great question, and confine ourselves to the plain teaching of Scripture on the subject; and, in so doing, we maintain that if the professing church quotes the Fourth Commandment and parallel Scriptures, in defence of keeping the sabbath, then it is evident, that, in almost every case, the law is entirely set aside. Observe, the word is, "thou shalt not do *any* work." This ought to be perfectly binding on all who take the Jewish ground. There is no room here for introducing what we deem to be "works of necessity," we may think it necessary to kindle fires, to make servants harness our horses, and drive us hither and thither. But the law is stern and absolute, severe and unbending. It will not, it cannot, lower its standard to suit our convenience or accommodate itself to our thoughts. The mandate is, "thou shalt not do *any* work," and that, moreover, on "the seventh day," which answers to our Saturday. We ask for a single passage of Scripture in which the day is changed, or in which the strict observance of the day is, in the smallest degree, relaxed.

We request the reader of these lines to pause and search out this matter thoroughly, in the light of Scripture. Let him not be scared as by some terrible bugbear, but let him, in true Berean nobility of spirit, "search the Scriptures." By so doing, he will find that, from the second chapter of Genesis, down to the very last passage in which the sabbath is named, it means the *seventh* day and none other; and, further, that there is not so much as a shadow of divine authority for altering the mode of observing that day. Law is law; and, if we are under the law, we are bound to keep it, or else be cursed, for "it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." (Deut. xxvii. 26; Gal. iii. 10.)

But it will be said, "We are not under the Mosaic law; we are the subjects of the Christian economy." Granted—most fully, freely, and thankfully granted. All true Christians are, according to the teaching of Romans vii. and viii. and Galatians iii. and iv. the happy and privileged subjects of the Christian dispensation? But, if so, what is the day which specially characterizes that dispensation? Not "the seventh day," but "the first day of the week"—"THE LORD'S DAY." This is, pre-eminently, the Christian's day. Let him observe this day, with all the sanctity, the sacred reverence, the hallowed retirement, the elevated tone, of which his new nature is capable. We believe the Christian's retirement from all secular things cannot possibly be too profound on the Lord's day. The idea of any one, calling himself a Christian, making the Lord's day a season of what is popularly called recreation, unnecessary travelling, personal convenience, or profit, in temporal things, is, to us, perfectly shocking. We are of opinion that such acting could not be too severely censured. We can safely assert, that we never yet came in contact with a godly, intelligent, right-minded Christian person who did not love and reverence the Lord's day; nor could we have any sympathy with one who could deliberately desecrate that holy and happy day.

We are aware, alas! that some persons have, through ignorance or misguided feelings, said things in reference to the Lord's day which we utterly repudiate, and that they have done things on the Lord's day of which we wholly disapprove. We believe that there is a body of New Testament teaching on the important subject of the Lord's day, quite sufficient to give that day its proper place in every well-regulated mind. The Lord Jesus rose from the dead on that day. (Matt. xxviii. 1—6; Mark xvi. 1, 2; Luke xxiv. 1; John xx. 1.) He met His disciples, once and again, on that day. (John xx. 19, 26.) The early disciples met to break bread on that day. (Acts xx. 7.) The apostle, by the Holy

Ghost, directs the Corinthians to lay by their contributions for the poor on that day. (1 Cor. xvi. 2.) And, finally, the exiled apostle was in the Spirit and received visions of the future on that day. (Rev. i. 10.) The above scriptures are conclusive. They prove that the Lord's day occupies a place quite unique, quite heavenly, quite divine. But they as fully prove the entire distinctness of the Jewish sabbath and the Lord's day. The two days are spoken of throughout the New Testament with fully as much distinctness as we speak of Saturday and Sunday. The only difference is, that the latter are heathen titles, and the former divine. (Comp. Matt. xxviii. 1; Acts xiii. 14, xvii. 2, xx. 7; Col. ii. 16.)

Having said thus much as to the question of the Jewish sabbath and the Lord's day, we shall suggest the following questions to the reader—namely, Where in the Word of God is the sabbath said to be changed to the first day of the week? Where is there any repeal of the law as to the sabbath? Where is the authority for altering the day or the mode of observing it? Where, in Scripture, have we such an expression as “the christian sabbath?” Where is the Lord's day ever called the sabbath?*

We would not yield to any of our dear brethren in the various denominations around us, in the pious observance of the Lord's day. We love and honour it with all our hearts; and were it not that the gracious Providence of God has so ordered it in these realms, that we can enjoy the rest and retirement of the Lord's day without pecuniary loss, we should feel called upon to abstain from business, and give ourselves wholly up to the worship and service of God on that day, not as a matter of cold legality, but as a holy and happy privilege.

It would be the deepest sorrow to our hearts to think that a true Christian should be found taking common

* For a fuller exposition of the doctrine of the sabbath, see “Notes on Genesis.” (Chapter ii.) Also “Notes on Exodus.” (Chaps xvi. & xxxi.) London: George Morrish,

ground with the ungodly, the profligate, the thoughtless, and the pleasure-hunting multitude, in desecrating the Lord's day. It would be sad, indeed, if the children of the kingdom and the children of this world were to meet in an excursion train on the Lord's day. We feel persuaded that any who, in any wise, profane or treat with lightness the Lord's day, act in direct opposition to the word and Spirit of God.

The above are our thoughts in reference to the Lord's day, and we therefore consider ourselves unfairly dealt with when we are represented as having any sympathy with the wickedness and infidelity that would propose measures for the open and deliberate profanation of the Lord's day. We utterly abhor such measures, and the spirit from which they emanate.

We shall now proceed to the consideration of the other points.

As regards the law, it is looked at in two ways: first, as a ground of justification; and, secondly, as a rule of life. A passage or two of Scripture will suffice to settle both the one and the other. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Rom. iii. 20.) "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." (Verse 28.) Again, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." (Gal. ii. 16.)

Then, as to its being a rule of life, we read, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law, by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him that is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." (Rom. vii. 4.) "But now are we delivered from the law, being dead to that (see margin) wherein we were held: that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness

of the letter." (Ver. 6.) Observe in this last-quoted passage, two things: 1st, "we are delivered from the law;" 2nd, not that we may do nature's pleasure, but "that we should *serve* in newness of spirit." Though delivered from bondage, it is our privilege to "serve" in liberty. Again, we read further on in the chapter, "And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be *unto death*." (Ver. 10.) It evidently did not prove as a rule of *life* to him. "I was *alive without the law* once: but *when the commandment came* sin revived, and *I died*." (Ver. 9.) Whoever "I" represents in this chapter, was alive until the law came, and then he died. Hence, therefore, the law could not have been a rule of life to him; yea, it was the very opposite, even a rule of death.

In a word, then, it is evident that a sinner cannot be justified by the works of the law; and it is equally evident that the law is not the rule of the believer's life. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." (Gal. iii. 10.) The law knows no such thing as a distinction between a regenerated and an unregenerated man; it curses all who attempt to stand before it. It rules and curses a man so long as he lives; nor is there any one who will so fully acknowledge that he cannot keep it as the true believer, and hence no one would be more thoroughly under the curse.

What, therefore, is the ground of our justification? and what is our rule of life? The word of God answers, "We are justified by the faith of Christ," and Christ is our rule of life. He bore all our sins in His own body on the tree; He was made a curse for us; He drained, on our behalf, the cup of God's righteous wrath; He deprived death of its sting, and the grave of its victory; He gave up His life for us; He went down into death, where we lay, in order that He might bring us up in eternal association with Himself in life, righteousness, favour, and glory, before our God and His God, our Father and His Father. (See carefully the following scriptures: John xx. 17; Rom. iv. 25;

v. 1—10; vi. 1—11; vii. *passim*, viii. 1—4; 1 Cor. i. 30, 31; vi. 11; xv. 55—57; 2 Cor. v. 17—21; Gal. iii. 13, 25—29; iv. 31; Eph. i. 19—23; ii. 1—6; Col. ii. 10—15; Heb. ii. 14, 15; 1 Peter i. 23.) If the reader will prayerfully ponder all these passages of Scripture he will see clearly that we are not justified by the works of the law; and not only so, but he will see how we are justified. He will see the deep and solid foundations of the Christian's life, righteousness, and peace, planned in God's eternal counsels, laid in the finished atonement of Christ, developed by God the Holy Ghost in the word, and made good in the happy experience of all true believers.

Then, as to the believer's rule of life, the apostle does not say, to me to live is the law, but "To me to live is Christ." (Phil. i. 21.) Christ is our rule, our model, our touchstone, our all. The continual inquiry of the Christian should be, not is this or that according to law? but, is it like Christ? The law never could teach me to love, bless, and pray for my enemies; but this is exactly what the gospel teaches me to do, and what the divine nature leads me to do. "Love is the fulfilling of the law," and yet were I to seek justification by the law, I should be lost; and were I to make the law my standard of action, I should fall far short of my proper mark. We are predestinated to be conformed, not to the law, but to the image of God's Son. We are to be like Him. (See Matt. v. 21—48; Rom. viii. 29; 1 Cor. xiii. 4—8; Rom. xiii. 8—10; Gal. v. 14—26; Eph. i. 3—5; Phil. iii. 20, 21; ii. 5; iv. 8; Col. iii. 1—17.)

It may seem a paradox to some to be told that "the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us," (Rom. viii. 4,) and yet that we cannot be justified by the law, nor make the law our rule of life. Nevertheless, thus it is if we are to form our convictions by the word of God. Nor is there any difficulty to the renewed mind in understanding this blessed doctrine. We are, by nature, "dead in trespasses and sins," and what can a dead man,

do? How can a man get life by keeping that which requires life to keep it—a life which he has not? And how do we get life? Christ is our life. We live in Him who died for us; we are blessed in Him who became a curse for us by hanging on a tree; we are righteous in Him who was made sin for us; we are brought nigh in Him who was cast out for us. (Rom. v. 6—15; Eph. ii. 4—6; Gal. iii. 13.) Having thus life and righteousness in Christ, we are called to walk as He walked, and not merely to walk as a Jew. We are called to purify ourselves even as He is pure; to walk in His footsteps; to show forth His virtues; to manifest His Spirit. (John xiii. 14, 15; xvii. 14—19; 1 Peter ii. 21; 1 John ii. 6, 29; iii. 3.)

We shall close our remarks on this head by suggesting two questions to the reader, namely—Would the Ten Commandments without the New Testament be a sufficient rule of life for the believer? Would the New Testament be a sufficient rule without the Ten Commandments? Surely that which is insufficient cannot be our rule of life.

We receive the Ten Commandments as part of the canon of inspiration; and, moreover, we believe that the law remains in full force to rule and curse a man as long as he liveth. Let a sinner only try to get life by it, and see where it will put him; and let a believer only shape his way according to it, and see what it will make of him. We are fully convinced that if a man is walking according to the spirit of the gospel, he will not commit murder nor steal; but we are also convinced, that a man, confining himself to the standard of the law of Moses, would fall very far short of the spirit of the gospel.

The subject of “the law” would demand much more elaborate exposition, but the limits of this paper do not admit of it, and we therefore entreat of the reader to look out for the various passages of scripture referred to and ponder them carefully. In this way we feel assured he will arrive at a sound conclusion, and be

independent of all human teaching and influence. He will see how that a man is justified freely by the grace of God, through faith in a crucified and risen Christ; that he is made a partaker of divine life, and introduced into a condition of divine and everlasting righteousness, and consequent exemption from all condemnation; that in this holy and elevated position, Christ is his object, his theme, his model, his rule, his hope, his joy, his strength, his all; that the hope which is set before him is to be with Jesus where He is, and to be like Him for ever. And he will also see that if, as a lost sinner, he has found pardon and peace at the foot of the cross, he is not, as an accepted and adopted son, sent back to the foot of Mount Sinai, there to be terrified and repulsed by the terrible anathemas of a broken law. The Father could not think of ruling with an iron law the prodigal whom He had received to His bosom in purest, deepest, richest grace. Oh! no; "Being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace, wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. v. 1, 2.) The believer is justified not by works, but by *faith*; he stands not in law, but in *grace*; and he waits not for judgment, but for *glory*.

We now come, in the third place, to treat of the subject of the Christian ministry, in reference to which we have only to say, that we hold it to be a divine institution—its source, its power, its characteristics are all divine and heavenly. We believe that the great Head of the Church received, in resurrection, gifts for His body. He, and not the Church, or any section of the Church, is the reservoir of the gifts. They are vested in Him, and not in the Church. He imparts them as, and to whom He will. No man, nor body of men, can impart gifts. This is Christ's prerogative, and His alone; and we believe that when He imparts a gift, the man who receives that gift is responsible to exercise the same, whether as an evangelist, a pastor, or a teacher, quite independently of all human authority.

We do not, by any means, believe that all are endowed with the above gifts, though all have some ministry to fulfil. All are not evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Such precious gifts are only administered according to the sovereign will of the divine Head of the Church. Man has no right to interfere with them. Wherever they really exist, it is the place of the assembly to recognize them with devout thankfulness. Christians are exhorted to remember them that are over them in the Lord, to know them that guide them, and those who addict themselves to the ministry of the saints and those who have spoken to them the word of life. Were they to refuse to do so, they would only be forsaking and rejecting their own mercies, for all things are theirs. (See Rom. xii. 3—8; 1 Cor. iii. 21—23; xii., xiv., xvi. 15; Gal. i. 11—17; Eph. iv. 7—16; 1 Thess. v. 12, 13; Heb. xiii. 7, 17; 1 Pet. iv. 10, 11.)

All this is simple enough. We can easily see where a man is divinely qualified for any department of ministry. It is not if a man *say* he has a gift, but if he in reality has it. A man may say he has a gift on the same principle as he may say he has faith, (James ii. 14,) and it may only be, after all, an empty conceit of his own ill-adjusted mind, which a spiritual assembly could not recognize for a moment. God deals in realities. A divinely-gifted evangelist is a reality; a teacher is a reality; a pastor is a reality; and such will be duly recognized, thankfully received, and counted worthy of all esteem and honour for their work's sake.

Now, we hold that unless a man has a *bonâ fide* gift imparted to him by the Head of the Church, all the instruction, all the education, and all the training that men could impart to him would not constitute him a christian minister. If a man has a gift, he is responsible to exercise, to cultivate, and to wait upon his gift. Such an one may, or may not, be extensively read in human literature; he may, or he may not, be able to enlist his extensive reading in the Master's service. But, clearly, if a man has *only* the qualifica-

tions which human literature, human science, and human culture can impart, he is no more competent to be a christian minister than a self-constituted quack is entitled to be regarded by the faculty of medicine as a duly-recognized practitioner.

Let us not be misunderstood. We hold that unless a man has a direct gift from Christ, though he had all the learning of a Newton, all the philosophy of a Bacon, all the eloquence of a Demosthenes, he is not a christian minister. He may be a very gifted and efficient minister of religion, so called; but a minister of religion and a minister of Christ are two different things. And, further, we believe that where the Lord Christ has bestowed a gift, that gift makes the possessor thereof a christian minister, whom all true Christians are bound to own and receive, quite apart from all human appointment. Whereas, though a man had all the human qualifications, human titles, and human authority, which it is possible to possess, and yet lacked that one grand reality, namely, Christ's gift, he is not a minister of Christ.

Such is our judgment in reference to the divine institution of the ministry; and hence, it is not fair or candid to accuse us of throwing that institution overboard. God forbid! We bless His name for christian ministry; and we feel assured that there are many truly gifted servants of Christ in the various denominations around us; but they are ministers of Christ, on the ground of possessing His gift, and not, by any means, on the ground of man's ordination. Man cannot add aught to a heaven-bestowed gift. As well might he attempt to add a shade to the rainbow, a tint to the violet, motion to the waves, height to the snow-capped mountains, or daub, with a painter's brush, the peacock's plumage, as attempt to render more efficient, by his puny authority, the gift which has come down from the risen and glorified Head of the Church. Ah! no; the vine, the olive, and the figtree, in Jotham's parable, (Judges ix.) needed not the appointment of the

other trees. God had implanted in each its specific virtue. It was only the worthless bramble which hailed with delight an appointment that raised it from the position of *a real nothing* to be an *official something*. Thus it is with a divinely-gifted man. He has what God has given him ; he wants, he asks, no more. He rises above the narrow enclosures which man's authority would erect around him, and plants his foot upon that elevated ground where prophets and apostles have stood. He feels that it lies not within the range of the schools and colleges of this world, to open to him his proper sphere of action. It appertains not to them to provide a setting for the precious gem which sovereign grace has imparted. The hand which has bestowed the gem can alone provide the proper setting. The grace which has implanted the gift can alone throw open a proper sphere for its exercise. What! can it be possible that those gifts which emanate from the Church's triumphant and glorious Lord are not available for her edification, until they are dragged through the mire of a heathen mythology? Alas! for the heart that can think so. As well might we say that the fatness of the olive and the pure blood of the grape must be mingled with the contents of a quagmire, to render them available for human use.

But, it will be asked, "Were there not elders and deacons in the early Church, and ought we not to have such likewise?" Unquestionably, there were elders and deacons in the early Church. They were appointed by the apostles, or those whom the apostles deputed. That is to say, they were appointed by the Holy Ghost, the only One who could then, or can now, appoint them. We believe that none but God can make or appoint an elder; and, therefore, for man to set about such work, is but a powerless form, an empty name. Men may, and do, point us to the shadows of their own creation, and call upon us to recognize in those shadows divine realities; but, alas! when we examine them in the light of Holy Scripture,

we cannot even trace the outline, to say nothing of the living, speaking, features of the divine original. We see divinely-appointed elders in the New Testament, and we see humanly-appointed elders in the professing church; but we can, by no means, accept the latter as a substitute for the former. We cannot accept a mere shadow in lieu of the substance. Neither do we believe that men have any divine authority for their act when they set about making and appointing elders. We believe that when Paul, or Timothy, or Titus ordained elders, they did so as acting by the power and under the direct authority of the Holy Ghost; but we deny that any man, or body of men, can so act now. We believe it was the Holy Ghost then, and it must be the Holy Ghost now. Human assumption is perfectly contemptible. If God raises up an elder or a pastor we thankfully own him. He both can and does raise up such. He does raise up men fitted, by His Spirit, to take the oversight of His flock, and to feed His lambs and sheep. His hand is not shortened that He cannot provide those blessings for His Church, even amid its humiliating ruins. The reservoir of spiritual gift in Christ, the Head, is not so exhausted that He cannot shed forth upon His body all that is needed for the edification thereof. We are of opinion that, were it not for our impatient attempts to provide for ourselves, by making pastors and elders of our own, we should be far more richly endowed with pastors and teachers after God's own heart. We need not marvel that He leaves us to our own resources when, by our unbelief, we limit Him in His. Instead of "proving" Him we "limit" Him; and, therefore, we are shorn of our strength, and left in barrenness and desolation; or, what is worse, we betake ourselves to the miserable provisions of human expediency. However, we believe it is far better, if we have not God's reality, to remain in the position of real, felt, confessed weakness, than to put forth the hollow assumption of strength; we believe it is better to be real in our poverty than to put on the appearance of

wealth. It is infinitely better to wait on God for whatever He may be pleased to bestow, than to limit His grace by our unbelief, or hinder His provision for us by making provision for ourselves.

We ask, where is the Church's warrant for calling, making, or appointing pastors? Where have we an instance in the New Testament of a Church electing its own pastor? Acts i. 23—26 has been adduced in proof. But the very wording of the passage is sufficient to prove that it furnishes no warrant whatsoever. Even the eleven apostles could not elect a brother apostle, but had to commit it to higher authority. Their words are—"THOU, LORD, *which knowest the hearts of all*, shew whether of these two *thou hast chosen*." This is very plain. They did not attempt to choose. God knew the heart. He had formed the vessel. He had put the treasure therein, and He alone could appoint it to its proper place.

It is very evident, therefore, that the case of the eleven apostles calling upon the Lord to choose a man to fill up their number, affords no precedent whatever for a congregation electing a pastor; it is entirely against any such practice. God alone can make or appoint an apostle or an elder, an evangelist or a pastor. This is our firm belief, and we ask for a Scripture proof of its unsoundness. Human opinion will not avail; tradition will not avail; expediency will not avail. Let us be taught from the word of God, that the early Church ever elected its own pastors or teachers. We positively affirm that there is not so much as a single line of scripture in proof of any such custom. If we could only find direction in the word of God to make and appoint pastors, we should at once seek to carry such direction into effect; but, in the absence of any divine warrant, we could only regard it as a mimicry, on our part, to attempt such a thing. Why was not the Church at Ephesus, or why were not the Churches at Crete, directed to elect or appoint elders? Why was the direction given to Timothy and Titus, without the

slightest reference to the Church or to any part of the Church? Because, as we believe, Timothy and Titus acted by the direct power and under the direct authority of God the Holy Ghost, and, hence, their appointment was to be regarded by the Church as divine.*

But where have we anything like this now? Where is the Timothy or the Titus now? Where is there the least intimation in the New Testament that there should be a succession of men invested with the power to ordain elders or pastors? True, the Apostle Paul, in his Second Epistle to Timothy, says, "The things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." (2 Tim. ii. 2.) But there is not a word here about a succession of men having power to ordain elders and pastors. Assuredly teaching is not ordination, still less is it imparting the power to ordain. If

* We would here offer a remark, in reference to the appointment of Deacons in Acts vi. This case has been adduced in proof of the rightness of a congregation electing its own pastor; but the proof fails in every particular. In the first place, the business of those deacons was "to serve tables." Their functions, as deacons, were temporal, not spiritual. They might possess spiritual gift, independently altogether of their deaconship. Stephen did possess such.

But more than this. Although the disciples were called upon to look out for men competent to take charge of their temporal affairs, yet the apostles alone could appoint them. Their words are, "Whom *we* may appoint over this business." In other words, although there is a vast difference between a deacon and a pastor, between taking charge of money and taking the oversight of souls, yet even in the matter of a deacon, the appointment in Acts vi. was entirely divine; and hence it affords no warrant for a Church electing its own pastor.

We might further add, that *office* and *gift* are clearly distinguished in the word of God. There might be, and were, many elders and deacons in any given Church, and yet the fullest and freest exercise of gift when the whole Church came together into one place. Elders and deacons might or might not have the gift of teaching or exhortation. Such gift was quite independent of their special office. In 1 Cor. xiv., where it is said, "Ye may all prophesy one by one," and where we have a full view of the public assembly, there is not a word about an elder or a president of any kind whatever.

the inspired apostle had meant to convey to the mind of Timothy that he was to commit to others authority to ordain, and that such authority was to descend by a regular chain of succession, he could and would have done so, and in that case, the passage would have run thus: "The power which has been vested in you, the same do thou vest in faithful men, that they may be able also to ordain others." Such, however, is not the case; and we deny that there is any man, or body or men, now upon earth, possessing power to ordain elders, nor was that power or authority ever committed to the Church. We hold it to be absolutely divine, and, therefore, when God sends an elder or a pastor, an evangelist or a teacher, we thankfully hail the heaven-bestowed gift; but we desire to be delivered from all empty pretension. We will have God's reality or nothing. We will have heaven's genuine coin, not earth's counterfeit. Like the Tirshatha of old, who said "that they should not eat of the most holy things till there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim," (Ez. ii. 63,) so would we say, let us rather, if it must be so, remain without office-bearers, than substitute, for God's realities, the shadows of our own creation. Ezra could not accept the pretensions of men. Men might *say* they were priests, but if they could not produce the divine warrant and the divine qualifications, they were utterly rejected. In order for a man to be entitled to approach the altar of the God of Israel, he should not only be descended from Aaron, but also be free from every bodily blemish. (See Lev. xxi. 16—23.) So, now, in order for any man to minister in the Church of God, he must be a regenerated man, and he must have the necessary spiritual qualifications. Even St. Paul, in his powerful appeal to the conscience and judgment of the Church at Corinth, refers to his spiritual gifts and the fruits of his labour, as the indisputable evidences of his apostleship. (See 2 Cor. x., xii.)

Before dismissing the subject of the Christian

Ministry, we would offer a remark upon the practice of laying on of hands, which is presented in the New Testament in two ways. First, we find it connected with the communication of a positive gift. "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." (1 Tim. iv. 14.) This is again referred to in the second epistle: "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee by the putting on of my hands." (2 Tim. i. 6.) This latter passage fixes the import of the expression "presbytery," as used in the first epistle. Both passages prove that the act of laying on of hands, in Timothy's case, was connected with the imparting of a gift. But, secondly, we find the laying on of hands adopted simply for the purpose of expressing full fellowship and identification, as in Acts xiii. 3. It could not possibly mean ordination in this passage, inasmuch as Paul and Barnabas had been in the ministry long before. It simply gave beautiful expression to the full identification of their brethren in that work unto which the Holy Ghost had called them, and to which He alone could send them forth.

Now, we believe that the laying on of hands as expressing ordination, if there be not the power to impart a gift, is worth nothing, if indeed it be not mere assumption; but if it be merely adopted as the expression of full fellowship in any special work or mission, we should quite rejoice in it. For example, if two or three brethren felt themselves called of God to go on an evangelistic mission to the United States of America, and that those with whom they were in communion perceived in them the needed gift and grace for such a work, we should deem it exceedingly happy were they to set forth their unqualified approval and their brotherly fellowship by the act of laying on of hands. Beyond this we can see no value whatever in that act.

Having thus, so far as our limits would permit, treated of the questions of the Sabbath, the Law, and

the Christian Ministry—having shown that we honour and observe the Lord's day, that we give the Law its divinely-appointed place, and, finally, that we hold the sacred and precious institution of the Christian Ministry, we might close this paper, did we not feel called upon to meet another charge which is frequently preferred against us—viz., the maintenance of a Jesuitical reserve in reference to our peculiar opinions until such time as we have persons under our influence. This charge is totally unfounded. In our general teaching and preaching, we seek to set forth the fundamental truths of the gospel, such as the doctrine of the Trinity, the eternal Sonship, the personality of the Holy Ghost, the plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture, the eternal counsels of God in reference to His elect, and yet the fullest and freest presentation of His love to a lost world; the solemn responsibility of every one who hears the glad tidings of salvation to accept the same; man's total ruin by nature and by practice; his inability to help himself in thought, word, or deed; the utter corruption of his will; Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection; His absolute deity and perfect humanity in one person; the perfect efficacy of His blood to cleanse from all sin; perfect justification and sanctification by faith in Christ, through the operation of God the Holy Ghost; the eternal security of all true believers; the entire separation of the Church in calling, standing, and hope, from this present world.

Then, again, we hold, in common with many of our brethren in the Church of England and in the Free Church of Scotland, that the hope of the believer is set forth in these words of Christ: "I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also." (John xiv. 3.) We believe that the early Christians were converted to "that blessed hope;" that it was the common hope of Christians in apostolic times. To adduce proofs would swell this paper into a volume.

Furthermore, we believe that all disciples should

meet on the first day of the week to break bread, (Acts xx. 7,) and when so met, they should look to the Head of the Church to furnish the needed gifts, and to the Holy Ghost to guide in the due administration of these gifts.

As to the scriptural ordinance of baptism, we look upon it as a beautiful exhibition of the truth that the believer is associated with Christ in death and resurrection. (See Matt. xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 16; Acts ii. 38, 41; viii. 38; x. 47, 48; xvi. 33; Rom. vi. 3, 4.)

As regards the precious institution of the Lord's Supper, we believe that Christians should celebrate it on every Lord's day, and that, in so doing, they commemorate the Lord's death until He come. We believe that, as baptism sets forth our death with Christ, so the Lord's Supper sets forth Christ's death for us. We do not see any authority in the word of God for regarding the Lord's Supper as "a sacrifice," "a sacrament," or "a covenant." The word is, "This do in remembrance of me." (See Matt. xxvi. 26, 28; Mark xiv. 22—24; Luke xxii. 19, 20; 1 Cor. xi. 23—26.)

The above is a very brief but explicit statement of our opinions and our practice, and we affectionately ask the candid and judicious reader where is there aught of the Jesuit therein? We meet in public, our worship meetings, our prayer meetings, our reading meetings, our lectures, our gospel preachings, are all open to the public.

No intelligent person could suppose that we ought, in preaching the gospel to the unconverted, to introduce the deeper mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, or the Church of God. The Lord Jesus spake the word to the people "as they were able to hear it." (Mark iv. 33.) The Holy Ghost, by the apostle, did the same. (1 Cor. iii. 1, 2; Heb. v. 11—14.) Should not every judicious teacher adapt his instructions to the condition of the taught? Who would teach conic sections or Euclid's elements to a child who had only learnt his alphabet? It must, at all times, be a question of

spiritual wisdom as to what character of truth one ought to bring before those with whom he comes in contact; and it may sometimes be a question of grace to withhold a topic which would only produce controversy and hinder christian fellowship; but surely wisdom and grace ought not to be dubbed with the opprobrious epithet of Jesuitical reserve.

But we have done. We would, in this closing line, entreat the reader to "search the Scriptures." Let him try everything by that standard. Let him see to it that he has plain Scripture for everything with which he stands connected. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Isaiah viii. 20.)

We can honestly say we love, with all our hearts, all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; and wherever there is one who preaches a full, free, and an everlasting salvation to perishing sinners, through the blood of the Lamb, we wish him God speed, in the name of the Lord.

We now commend the reader to the blessing of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. If he be a true believer, we pray that, in his course down here, he may be a bright and faithful witness for his absent Lord. But if he be one who has not yet found peace in Jesus, we would say to him, with solemn emphasis and earnest affection, "**BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD, WHICH TAKETH AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD.**" (John i. 29.)

4, CHURCH STREET, COLERAINE,

October, 1857.