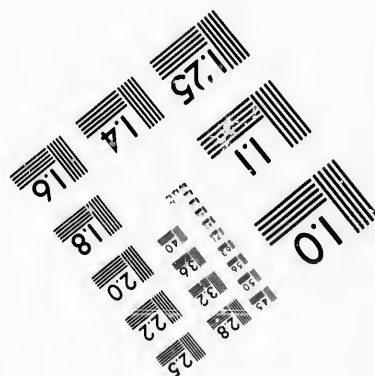
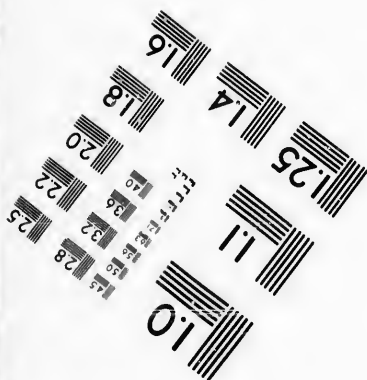
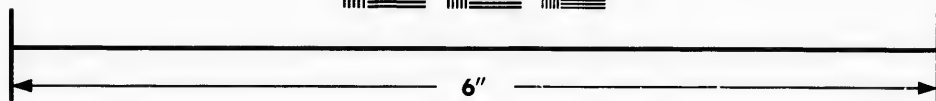
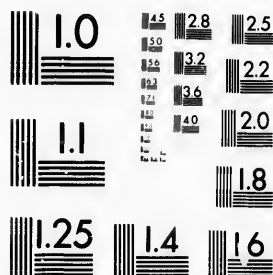


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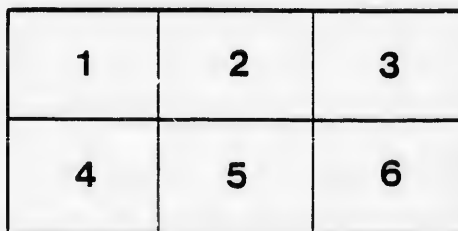
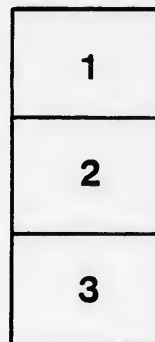
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# PLYMOUTHISM

## WEIGHED IN THE BALANCES

BY

REV. JOHN NICHOLS,

*Pastor of St. Mark's Church, Montreal.*



MONTREAL:

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### NOTE.

The following article was not written with any view to publication. It was prepared in the first instance at the request of the Protestant Ministerial Association of Montreal and read before that body. Subsequently it appeared in the columns of the *Presbyterian College Journal*, where it awakened fresh interest. Permission to issue it in pamphlet form was obtained by its present Publishers, to whose kindness a further issue in the *Canada Presbyterian* is also due.

J. N.

# PLYMOUTHISM

## WEIGHED IN THE BALANCES.

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“Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep’s clothing.”—Matthew vii. 15.

The word placed at the head of this paper is intended to stand for a broad designation of the tenets held by the Plymouth Brethren. Curiously enough this sect sprang up in Dublin, and within the pale of what was then the Established Church of Ireland. A dentist by the name of Groves left Plymouth, England, in 1828, and entered Trinity College, intending to qualify himself for the foreign mission work of the Church of England. Shortly afterwards he announced two conclusions to which he had come : 1. That a man might preach the Gospel without Episcopal ordination ; 2. That Christians should partake of the Sacrament of the Lord’s supper every Lord’s Day. Accordingly, he and a few other devout churchmen met weekly to break bread, and to exhort and instruct each other. There was no intention at that time of forming a separate organization. In 1829 Mr. Groves left for the east, and in the following year his associates formed the first society of the Brethren in Dublin. Mr. J. N. Darby, hitherto a curate in the Irish Church, became one of its leading members. In 1831 Messrs. Darby and Newton established a society in Plymouth ; but in 1845 they disagreed, became bitter antagonists and henceforth the leaders of two opposing sects of the Brethren.

### THE ORIGIN OF THE NAME.

A few weeks before this split took place the society at Plymouth attempted to impose its views, concerning the pastorate, upon the friends in Ireland, but the society in Cork retorted, “We will not be overruled by these Plymouth

Brethren." The public at once caught the spirit of this designation, and "Plymouth Brethren" has been persistently applied to all the parties and factions of that persuasion ever since although the Brethren themselves protest against the appellation.

#### PLYMOUTHISM AND THE CHURCHES.

The attitude of the Brethren towards other religious denominations is extremely arrogant and offensive. They avow that Christendom, as now represented by the churches, has departed from the constitution, the order and practice of the apostles—that it is rent into pieces—that it lies in ruins—that it is a horde of schismatics, errorists, unbelievers and sinners, held together only by expedients and compromises. They affirm that any attempt to bring back this chaos to unity and order, by discipline and a paid ministry, is presumption and folly. All who stay in this "Sodom," whether ministers or people, are put without the pale of salvation. So the sentence is pronounced, and let no one appeal from it—are not the Brethren our judges? So much for modesty.

#### SOME HOMCEPATHIC LOGIC.

Ask a Plymouthite to what church he belongs, and he will answer with an air of pitying contempt, "I belong to *no* church, I am a Christian, a believer in Jesus Christ." That settles it, and is intended to settle the interrogator also. This answer will probably be accompanied by the parade of a limp Bible and an invitation to leave the filthy "Sodom" of the churches, and join the Brethren. According to Plymouthism, the very existence of the visible churches of Christendom is a sin against the Holy Ghost. We shall let this statement pass for what it is worth, and ask, What is the remedy proposed by the Brethren for these divisions? "Tell it not in Gath"—Plymouthism is the only cure. In other words, the Brethren propose to put down sectarianism by raising another sect—to heal our divisions by creating a multitude of their own—to annihilate the denominations by adding several more to their number. This is applying the homœopathic principle with a vengeance. It is a pretence of curing like by like—evil by evil—of



washing away bitterness by turning upon it the waters of Marah! But logic does take strange freaks at times. The absurdity is intensified by the strifes and divisions among the physicians themselves. As a matter of fact Plymouthism began to split into sects and parties soon after it began to exist, and it has been dividing and sub-dividing ever since. Each of these sects is constantly pelting the others with the worst of names. One Brother, writing about the Darbyite contingent, asks, "Have you tried these Brethren, the Darbyites? I have tried them and found them false prophets in every sense of the word, false. They are false in what they say of their brethren, they are false in doctrine, and they are false in their walk." The Darbyites retort with similar pleasantries,—“Let brotherly love continue.” Each sect writes and speaks as spitefully of the others, as if they were Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Methodists or Baptists. Each party is an Ishmaelite, and if either is to be credited, old Diogenes might still find use for his lantern among the others. There is hope, however, for “pure and undefiled religion,” for there are not wanting indications that these contending factions will neutralize each other’s influence by mutual recriminations, or they will divide and sub-divide each other out of existence.

#### WHOLESALE SHEEP-STEALING.

The folds of Plymouthism are supplied by proselytism. The “highways and hedges” at home, and dark heathenism abroad are outside the scope of its mission. Yet, surely, these were within the scope of Christ’s command to His Church. We accuse the Brethren here of a lack of the primary and most distinctive mark of a Christian Church. Whoever heard of Plymouthism missioning the dark places of the earth? Instead of this Christ-like effort it expends its energies in maligning ministers and robbing churches. Such a gross violation of the command, “Go ye, therefore, and disciple all nations,” is significant. Plymouthism allows other churches to bring home the sheep from the mountain and wilderness, and prepares itself to shear off the fleece. All who permit themselves to be sheared are saints, while all who have common

sense and Christian firmness enough to refuse are generally denounced as sinners. The mission of these people is almost exclusively to unsettle the minds of those who already believe in Christ as their Saviour, and to allure them, by specious misrepresentations, from their allegiance to those who sought them in the wilderness and restored them to the "Good Shepherd." Wherever they go they are arrant disturbers of the peace of churches,—moral anarchists and plagues. They "creep into houses and lead captive silly women," and silly men, too, for the matter of that. A small percentage of these are good people, and love the Saviour sincerely, but their ideas of what the Bible teaches are crude and confused. Their piety is not an intelligent one. They are "reeds shaken with the wind," rather than houses built upon the rock. But, for the most part, Plymouthism is the last refuge of spiritual incurables—the hiding-place for much of the pious vagabondage, sentimentalism, and Pharisaic bombast which, for good cause, have been cast out of the visible vineyard, or which the Brethren have raked out for themselves. There are but few members of the fraternity who do not try to throw filth upon the church from which they have been cut off, or from which they have been inveigled by some ultra-purist brother. They talk flippantly about having "escaped from Sodom," "from darkness," "from the gall of bitterness," etc., by which terms they charitably mean the respective Christian churches of the land, or the various shibboleths of the Brethren, to which they are equally opposed. There is one thing, however, for which the churches should be grateful to Plymouthism, viz., for providing a *receptacle* into which these malcontents and excrescences of the religious world can be "gathered."

#### UNSCRIPTURAL SEPARATION.

The Plymouthite claims to be too holy to associate with any of our existing churches. Salvation is impossible in any of them; but it is a "sure and certain hope" among the Brethren, for every one of them is saved by grace! In illustration of this position it may be mentioned that some time ago a Plymouthite rose at the end of a service conducted

by a minister now stationed in this city, and said "that man is going to hell, and you are all going to hell with him." Permit an illustration of this extraordinary purity,—A pious lady, who was a member of the church of which the writer is the pastor, had a legacy left her of \$1,200. A Plymouth brother was taken to the house and introduced to her; the limp Bible and the usual talk about the iniquity of the churches, and the piety of God's people made a favourable impression upon her mind. His visit was repeated, and repeated. Finally the brother persuaded her that he had a good opportunity for investing the \$1,200 to her advantage. She trusted him, and he decamped with the money to the United States! This incident is not mentioned because there are no robbers in our churches, but because the Brethren claim that they are all saved by grace, and are bound by the loftiness of their moral character to keep aloof from our Christian denominations.

The talismanic word of Plymouthism is, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." To this every Christian will respond—"Amen." It is needless to say that every Evangelical church insists upon separation from the "world" and its "uncleanness." But when Plymouthism makes use of the text just quoted to prove that Christian believers should come out from our churches, because those churches are *scenes of moral filthiness*, it must be held guilty of perverting the Word of God. The passage is found in 2 Cor. vi. 17, and a glance at its context will show that it will bear no such meaning as the Brethren attempt to foist upon it. The apostle was not urging separation from those who hold false doctrine, but from those who are addicted to vile practices; not from an existing Christian Church, but from the abominations of heathenism to which the Corinthians had, in times past, been addicted. For Christians, in these days, the text, certainly, demands separation, not, however, from a visible organization which holds Christ to be the head, and against which no wickedness can truthfully be charged, but from worldlings who are habitually and palpably wicked. We hold it to be grossly insulting and grossly false on the part of the Brethren,

to stigmatize as "unbelievers" and "unclean," those who honestly and practically avow their faith in the Redeemer. When the Brethren tell us that, by separating from the Christian denominations, they are carrying out this Apostolic injunction both in word and in spirit, and that they alone represent the true ideal of the Apostolic Church, we are driven to ask,—“In which of the many divisions of your fraternity is this assumed purity of faith and practice to be found?” Put the question to any one of their divisions in this city, and it will be found that the moment any one lays claim to the possession, all the others will unite in hurling anathemas at it—like Herod and Pilate, they will become friends for the nonce by a common antipathy to the alleged usurper. Does not such a presumption as this smack strongly of infallibility? Is not the claim a piece of unblushing arrogance, in presence of the bitterness, faction and discordance so rampant among themselves? Is it not chimerical to imagine that such a heterogeneous assemblage, as Plymouthism presents, can be the only foundation upon which the disciples of Christ can unite?

The interpretation put upon “Come out from among them,” is as false as false can be, and so are the ideas of church unity, upon which the Brethren base their separation theory. Mr. Davis, a light and a Plymouthite, writes: “Now, the Church of God is one body. Nevertheless we find to-day 1,300 sects and parties. Which am I to join? But surely it must be *evil* to be a fellow-worker in supporting *parties*! Then, I will join *none*; for God says, there is one body. And if I was in one of the sects, I must straightway ‘go out,’ ‘go forth,’ ‘separate,’ ‘depart.’ And do what? ‘Endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit.’” There are at least two radical errors in this statement. First, in the supposition that the “unity of the spirit” means oneness of visible organization; and second, in the theory that unity can be secured by separation. We need only to look at the divisions of the Brethren for proof. They have separated; but are they united? The Darbyite, the Newtonite and others separated from the churches of England and Ireland, but the time soon came when they quarrelled among themselves, separated and

bitterly denounced each other. The Christian separated from the Jew, and the Protestant from the Romanist; but who, except a Plymouth Brother, would argue that these are made one by separation? Paul shows us a "more excellent way." In Eph. iv. 2, he tells us how the "unity of the spirit" may be, and is to be, kept "with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love." Strangely enough there is not a hint at separation in these words and yet all the sects of the Brethren are built upon this error. The apostle is asking for what the numerous factions of the Brethren prove that they have not, viz., amity, concord, brotherhood and oneness of feeling and purpose. Surely these virtues may obtain among men, although they happen to live in different houses. We readily admit that the Scriptures do not present us with a formal and dogmatic statement concerning the distinction between the *visible* and *invisible* Church. But this is of little consequence in determining the existence of the fact itself. There is sufficient evidence of this distinction in a fact which the Brethren themselves admit, viz., that all professed Christians are not true believers in Christ, and in the enjoyment of salvation. The saved Church, as God sees it, is a very different thing from the organizations which men call by that name. There is an invisible, spiritual and elect Church within the visible Churches of Christendom. The Brethren deny this distinction, although we have the warrant of Scripture for making it. The only distinction which they can see is made by the line which separates them from the evangelical denominations—a line which they have kindly laid down themselves—a line by which they charitably divide the saved from the unsaved. "Come out from among the churches, and you are the elect of God—stay in them and you are in filthy Sodom." This, again, either involves infallibility on the part of the Brethren, or it is a piece of impious presumption. Humility is a virtue, and charity "vaunteth not itself!" In the meantime our Saviour teaches that the "Kingdom of Heaven"—the visible church—contains "wise" and "foolish," "wheat" and "tares," and will continue to do so until the "Bridegroom cometh," and the angels shall gather the harvest.

## PLYMOUTHISM AND "SYSTEM."

The Brethren are fiercely hostile to any settled method of church government. To have regular office bearers, or any rules for conducting business, or any pre-arranged regulations of any kind for anything, is proclaimed an offence against the prerogatives and supremacy of the Holy Ghost. They claim that He presides over all their affairs, and that He dictates all their speech and all their business. Their preachers are said to be His mouthpieces, and utter only what He inspires. Well, the permanent presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church is one of the blessed doctrines taught by our Master, and one which His people can never lose sight of. But to say, because of this, that Christians are so many pieces of irresponsible machinery, as the Brethren would make them out to be, is simply to say what is not warranted by Scripture, and what is contradicted by the "goings on" of the Brethren themselves. They will not deny the presence of the Holy Ghost in the New Testament churches. But to be consistent with their theory, they should deny the existence, in those churches, of ordained elders, deacons, deaconesses and other officers, specially set aside for the management of church business. Will the Brethren do this? Besides, if the Holy Ghost presides over all their meetings, superintending all their affairs, and dictating all their speeches, business and acts, as they claim, we do not see how they can escape the conclusion, that He is, consequently, chargeable with all the blunders, divisions, animosities, and brawls of which they have been guilty. The very supposition is monstrous, but the Brethren are responsible for it. We have authentic accounts of some of their meetings, over which, it is pretty clear, that some one, who is not the Holy Ghost, presided. As a matter of fact, the presidency of the Holy Ghost is ignored and belied by the Brethren themselves. They have their pre-arranged methods, rules, regulations, order of meetings, etc., like the churches which they so flip-pantly condemn. What are their hymn books, places and times of meeting, regular preachers, methods of conducting worship, schemes for raising money, and other things of a like nature? In our simplicity we are in the habit of classifying these under the tabooed word, "System," and it is

noticeable that the Brethren call them by that name when speaking of them in connection with other churches.

CARRYING A "MUZZLE" WITHOUT AUTHORITY.

A paid minister is a sore grievance to the Plymouthite. It is quite true that those who "hold forth" among the Brethren do not decline payment whenever it is forthcoming. They have, however, an ingenious method of accounting for this, and one which is worthy of the Jesuit himself. Dr. Davis writes, "I do not know of one example in all the New Testament to support the practice of a paid ministry." But does he know an example to support the contrary proposition, viz.,—that the ministry should *not* be paid? In the meantime let the Doctor continue his sophistry: "But as regards itinerant pastors, evangelists and teachers, the principle is plain enough, that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel." The distinction drawn is this: that preaching the Gospel is preaching exclusively to *unbelievers*, and that such preaching should be paid for, according to 1 Cor. ix. 14, "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel." On the other hand, it is said that the work of the pastor or elder is to preach to believers only, *i.e.*, "To feed the flock of God," and therefore he should not be paid. We demand, On what authority does Plymouthism make this distinction? Our position is, that the New Testament nowhere warrants either of these propositions, but that it does warrant the very reverse. Let us see. The command to "feed the Church of God" is found in Acts xx. 28. But, according to verse 17, those who received this command were "elders" in the church at Ephesus. It is undeniable that the "elder" in this passage was a *settled* pastor, and preached to believers. Now, the Plymouthite says that these should not be paid. But Paul says that they ought to be paid. In Timothy v. 17, we read, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine." But what has this "double honour" to do with the question of pastoral support? The answer is in the following (verse 18): "For the Scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that

treadeth out the corn. And the labourer is worthy of his hire." Out of his own mouth the Plymouthite is, again, convicted of perverting the Scriptures.

Still farther : in 1 Cor. ix. 7, Paul presents three illustrations in support of the fact, that the "elder"—minister or settled pastor—should be supported, viz., the cases of the *soldier*, the *vinedresser*, and the *shepherd*. His argument is, that as each of these is rewarded for his labours, so should the minister be. But the apostle has not done yet ; in verse thirteen he tells us that the priests of the temple, "live of the things of the temple." The Plymouthite will scarcely have the temerity to assert that those priests were "itinerant evangelists." It is a simple fact of history that they were settled ministers and had a settled income. In these enlightened days the Brethren would stigmatize those paid ministers as "money-grabbers ;" but the fact remains that they were paid by Divine authority. There is one favourite text of the Brethren upon this matter which is worth a passing notice, viz :—"It is more blessed to give than to receive." Still, Christ who first uttered the words said, also, "The labourer is worthy of his hire." "It is more blessed to give than to receive." By the way, would not this text apply to the "itinerant evangelist," or to the cobbler, with as much force as it does to the minister ? The minister was certainly not singled out by Christ for this special generosity and blessedness. The Brethren tell us that "the minister ought to live by faith and not upon a fixed income." So he might, and would, perhaps, if the butcher, the baker, the tailor, the landlord, the city tax-gatherer, etc., could be persuaded to do business upon the same terms. Mr. E. Rust says : "Many Brethren live by faith, and find it to answer very well—they have hats, clothes, provisions, luxuries, and \$1,000 a year, while Paul hungered and fasted, and the poor starving saints in Jerusalem did likewise."

"BREAKING BREAD."

All evangelical churches are at one upon the importance of the Lord's Supper ; but when these Plymouth sectaries insist that Scripture requires its celebration *every Lord's Day*, they must pardon us if we ask for chapter and verse. The only



text looking in that direction is found in Acts xx. 7, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." We submit that there is not one word here to furnish either rule or inference in support of the Brethren's theory. There is not one word to show that the weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper was then a practice, or that it is now an obligation. All that can be gathered from the text is that upon this particular occasion the disciples had come together to break bread, and that Paul preached to them. We have no quarrel with the Brethren for their weekly breaking of bread ; but when they abuse and denounce us for not accepting their *ipse dixit* as a Divine Revelation we crave leave to enter a protest. Moreover, they pretend to a great respect for Apostolic precedent, especially in minute details. Why, then, do they depart from it in this case ? As a rule they break bread in the morning, whereas the New Testament churches did so in the evening. Again, they assume a sitting posture, while the posture of the New Testament churches was that of reclining. But Plymouthism does not take well to logic.

#### HIS HEAVENLY HUMANITY.

There are many doctrinal errors fundamental to this system, but space will not permit us to enlarge upon them. There is, for instance, their error respecting the person of Christ. They tell us that the words, "made of a woman," do not mean "born of a woman," and that he was not man of the substance of his mother, but that of his Father. Hence they talk about the "Divine Man," and his "Heavenly Humanity." The contention is that the Holy Ghost introduced some divine element into his human nature. The text quoted in support of the theory is 1 Cor. xv. 47, "The second man is the Lord from heaven." In reply we might quote Heb. ii. 14, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise took part of the same." We may point out also that the words of the angel were not, "The Holy Ghost conceived in the womb of the virgin ;" but, "*Thou shalt conceive in thy womb,*"—words conveying a very different meaning (see Luke i. 31.). His humanity,

therefore, must have been of *her* substance, and so *not* divine. In harmony with this, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews frequently uses the phrase, "This man," and Paul, Romans viii. 3, tells us that the Redeemer was "made in the likeness of sinful flesh." If any other proof were needed there is the unanswerable fact of His death.

#### ERROR CONCERNING THE WORK OF CHRIST.

Not only do the Brethren deny the vicarious character of the Saviour's righteousness, but they limit His *atoning* sufferings to His sufferings upon the cross. Other sufferings are admitted, but these are ascribed to causes which are not easy to understand. On this point Mr. Darby had better speak for himself: "There is a double character of suffering besides atoning work, which Christ has entered into and which others can feel—the sufferings arising from the sense of chastening in respect of sin, and these mixed with the pressure of Satan's power in the soul, and the terror of foreseen wrath. In the former we suffer with Christ as a privilege; in the latter we suffer for our folly and under God's hand. But Christ has entered into it. He sympathizes with us. But all this is distinct from suffering instead of us, so as to save us from suffering, undergoing God's wrath that we might not." We are told also that Christ endured "distress under the sense of sins," and this, again, as distinct from His atoning work. But does not this involve a charge of guilt against Christ? Can any but the guilty experience a "sense of sin?" And yet John declares that "He knew no sin."

#### ERROR CONCERNING FAITH.

The teaching of the Brethren about faith is deeply tinged with Sandemanianism. With them faith is but an intellectual assent to the doctrines of the Gospel. Christ came to save sinners—that is faith. Christ died for me—that is faith. It stops with "If I may but touch the hem of His garment I shall be made whole"—it does not rush through the crowd and lay its hand upon the seamless robe. There is no *laying hold* of eternal life in Plymouthism. Yet Jesus said: "Stretch forth thy hand," "Come unto Me," etc.

ERRORS CONCERNING THE MORAL LAW.

Their teaching upon the Christian's relation to the moral law is simply Antinomianism. They claim that Christians are not under any obligation to it. The stern Sinaitic Code was abolished for them in the death of Christ. Sinai was for the Jew and not for the Gentile ; the Christian is " not under the law but under grace." If he puts himself under the Ten Commandments, he puts himself under the curse. The Decalogue does not bind hand, foot, eye or tongue. What wonder that the good Brother ran away with the lady's \$1,200! But if the Plymouthite is guilty of any rascality, he claims that it is not he that has done it, *it was the devil*. Who could believe or trust a Plymouthite after this? Unfortunately, in reading the Scriptures, the Brethren have a bad habit of stopping just where they should go on. Paul certainly says in Rom. vi. 14, " For ye are not under the law, but under grace." But his argument here is that the *legal* enactments of the law have made *no provision* for our salvation from the *power and penalty* of sin—but *grace has*. In this case, as in so many others, the Brethren have either ignorantly, or intentionally, wrested the Scripture from its evident teaching.\* Had they read the following verse it might have checked their impulsiveness. The Saviour's own words also, Matt. v. 17-18 : " Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets," etc., are sufficient to show that the law is still in force.

ERROR CONCERNING THE BELIEVER'S RELATION TO  
EARTHLY EMPLOYMENTS AND PHILANTHROPIC  
INSTITUTIONS.

We are told, by Plymouthism, that the world is under the curse ; that most of its employments are for the benefit of the devil, and that its governments are in the hands of the wicked. The believer, therefore, it is said, must not touch or handle these unclean things. He may be a doctor, or a farmer, however, or may work at a few branches of mechanics ; but most of the other employments are devilish. Even missionary societies and benevolent institutions are placed in the same category, so the believer must " come out from among them." Well,

Joseph was a prime minister in a heathen country, and what is more, he seems to have been placed there by God. Daniel and Nehemiah were politicians in the government of Persia, and nobody condemns them for it. Erastus was chamberlain in filthy Corinth, and Cornelius was a military officer of imperial Rome, and there were "saints in Cæsar's household." But did an apostle, or an angel, or God ever command them to "come out"? The Brethren would have done so, and would do so still. This is another instance of their obtuseness, or something worse. We take it that Paul was as good a Christian and as great a scholar as any of the Brethren, yet we find him appealing to Lysias and unto Cæsar! And is it not by Christ that "kings reign and princes decree justice?"

#### ERROR CONCERNING THE CHURCH.

We have pointed out that the Brethren deny the existence of a spiritual and invisible church within the various visible organizations, while the parables of Christ and the Apostolic and pastoral epistles teach this distinction. We are told, farther, that the church had no actual existence before the Day of Pentecost—that previous to the outpouring of the Holy Ghost it existed only in the *purpose* of God. Mr. W. Trotter says: "It was not till after the death and resurrection of Jesus that the church began. As to its actual existence on the earth, the church was formed by the descent of the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost." This quietly rules out of the church all the Old Testament saints, all the worthies catalogued in Heb. xi. and the countless thousands whose names are not found there. They may have been saved, but they are not in the body of which Christ is the Head. And yet we do find a church existing before the death and resurrection of Christ—in fact, an Old Testament church. In Matt. xviii. Christ speaks of the church in connection with the offending brother. We find the church also in Psa. xxii. 22. "In the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee." The writer to the Heb. (ii. 12) in quoting that text, uses the word "church" instead of "congregation." Then we find Stephen declaring (Acts vii. 38) that Moses was a member

of the Old Testament church, "This is he that was in the church in the wilderness." But the Brethren quietly set Stephen aside and unchurch the great law-giver of Israel.

#### ERROR CONCERNING CHRIST' COMING.

According to Plymouthism there are yet to be *two* comings of Christ. In the first He will come "for" His saints, to take them out of the world. This is to be invisible and in the air. The second will be at the "last day," when He will bring His saints "with" Him to judge the wicked. The truth requires us to say that the "first" coming has been invented to patch out their premillenarian theory. There is not a shadow of ground for it in the Word of God; it is only an unwarrantable inference drawn from Paul's words to the Thessalonians—"Them, also, which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." *Ergo*, He must have previously come "for" them, in order that He might now bring them "with" Him! Further, we are told that the Lord may come "for" His people any day or any hour—that there is nothing to prevent this. This is wonderful! If there be nothing to prevent Him, how is it that He does not come? To an unsophisticated mind the very fact that He does not come is sufficient evidence that He is prevented by something. But the Brethren base another statement upon the one just made, viz., "the Scripture teaches that His people should live in daily expectation of His coming, as did the apostles and early Christians." The Scripture teaches nothing of the kind concerning the apostles—the huge blunders of modern premillenarians, to wit. It cannot be shown that the apostles lived in any such "daily expectation." On the contrary, Paul is constantly talking about his approaching "departure" by death, and Peter would have his readers remember certain things after his "decease." There is no Plymouthitic expectation of the Lord's coming in either case. But Paul has some positive teaching upon this matter, and it is fatal to the view of the Brethren. In 2 Thess. ii. 2 he rebukes the Thessalonians for their "daily expectation" error: "That ye be not soon shaken in mind; or be troubled; neither by

spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand!" And Peter, in his second epistle, and third chapter, makes it very clear that the day of the Lord's coming and the "last day" are one and the same event. Paul in 1 Thess. i. 7-10, teaches the same doctrine without the possibility of doubt.

On many other points the teaching of these people is not only defective, but positively erroneous. In our judgment their errors are more numerous and more fatal than those of the Roman Catholics. Repentance and the agency of the Holy Spirit, in working out the great purposes of Christian life and character, have no place in their creed. They are as bigoted as Mahomedans and as self-righteous as the Pharisees. According to their way of thinking, sin is rampant everywhere except among themselves. Still, on the whole, thanks to the constant batterings of their critics, they have patched up a tolerably consistent system of teaching—but at what a tremendous sacrifice of divine truth! The consistency is that of a patchwork or "crazy quilt," and in constructing it they have handled Scripture much in the same way as the ladies cut and shape the patches for that mysterious article. Texts are wrenched from their contextual meaning in a most reckless manner, and are cut down so as to fit into some nook or corner of the system. All that cannot be made to fit are thrown away as so much useless rubbish. There are few people on earth who carry on so large a business in parading Scripture, holiness and logic, with so small an amount of capital invested. Yet they are never amenable to argument. You may pelt them with logic; you may knock them from pillar to post with Scripture; you may leave them without a breath or a word to say for themselves, and in five minutes after they will as coolly proclaim the same errors to some one else, as if nothing had happened. In closing, we strongly urge that our policy must be, not to argue *with them*; but to *fully instruct our congregations in the truth of the Bible—to thoroughly indoctrinate the young, and so guard them against these and other errors.*



