

At the Conference with the Angels

Wednesday. 20th Aug. 1851

The Apostle delivered to the Angels a statement of the result of the recent Meeting of the Apostles at Albury to the following effect

My dear Brethren

“The Apostles have brought their recent sittings to a conclusion, and they have committed it to me in London, and to each Apostle in his tribe to make known the substance of their deliberation on the two principal subjects which have occupied them to the angels of Churches and Ministers of the Universal Church of the rank of Angel. I deem it therefore my duty to avail myself of this first opportunity to communicate the same to those here present – and what I shall now say will in substance be communicated in writing to the other Angels and through you and them to all under your respective charges.

The principal object of our assembling had respect to the cases of Mr Dalton and of Mr MacKenzie. And I come away with hearty thankfulness to God – a feeling in which my brethren here associated with me participate, in the consciousness that in answer to the prayers of all the Churches God has been pleased to be graciously present with us in our deliberations, and that He has enabled us to do all of which our present circumstances admit – all I think that in reason and faith under those circumstances could be expected. And our work has been transacted with the demonstration of one heart and of one mind (so far as these acts are concerned) in all the Apostles present.

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In order to make my statement intelligible it is necessary to advert slightly to past transactions with our two Brethren.

The only point in Mr MacKenzie[']s case which, as after so many years have elapsed, it would be wise to recall to memory is the fact of his voluntary absenting himself from us – declining to co-operate with us in the duties of the Apostleship. Without seeking to revive previous transactions to impute blame to him or (if it were necessary) to defend ourselves, our efforts have been directed to convince him of his error in leaving his place, and consequently upon that conviction, to induce him to return. To this fatal error on his part however he has continued throughout to adhere.

In the case of Mr. Dalton, it seems that having been led by what appeared to him the guidance of Providence to reside for a time in Yorkshire, he was induced to offer his services to do temporary duty in the Church of England. From this he was led on to take more permanent duty in the Church of England. And was in this position when we were called together in January 1846. He then wrote to us in answer to the Letter requiring his attendance stating that he found it inconsistent with these recently assumed duties to be present in our Councils, that he felt he could not ask us to become responsible for his act by giving him any leave of absence, but he avowed the continuance of his faith in the work of the Lord as a whole. *[And while in the then drooping state of the Churches generally (a state of which we are all perfectly cognizant) he suggested that in certain cases Churches and individuals might retire into the established Church, he suggested also that at Albury and in the larger congrega-

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tions, the Churches should be retained as rallying points for the future.] In our answer we expressed our opinion that it was impossible for us to give any leave of absence, that the responsibility of his absence must rest upon himself and that for ourselves we proposed to apply ourselves to our duties towards the Churches.

The cases therefore of the two Brethren were in circumstantial [sic] very distinct, and it has been impossible to adopt the same identical measures in each.

At our Meeting in June last we determined to send a Deputation of two of our number to each of them. To Mr. Dalton we deputed Mr. Percival [sic] and Mr. Dow to whom however was subsequently added Mr. Armstrong with the view to obtain from him an explicit answer whether he would resume his place and duties. To Mr. MacKenzie we deputed Mr. King Church and Mr. Tudor (and we subsequently empowered them to employ the services of Mr. Place and dr. Thompson) with a view to ascertain his present condition of mind, and to entreat of him to return to his duties.

We met again on the 1st of July, but finding that neither of the Cases was ripe for further consideration or action, we adjourned on the 7th of July until the 8th of August.

Upon our reassembling on the 8th of August and receiving the final reports of the Brethren whom we had deputed, it appeared that not only did Mr. MacKenzie persist in his refusal to resume his duties whatever might be the amelioration of his state of mind, but that Mr. Dalton also absolutely refused, no longer professing to retain his faith unshaken in the Work of the Lord as a whole, but expressing not absolute unbelief, but serious doubts both as to any proof in Scripture of God's purpose to restore

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Apostles and also as to the Divine character of the Work itself. * [After deliberating upon these respective cases we have suspended Mr. MacKenzie for the present from all Apostolical and Ministerial functions, we have committed his case to the care and wisdom of Mr. Woodhouse, who is also the one among the Apostles to whom belongs the pastoral oversight and care of Mr. MacKenzie, and we appointed to Mr. Dow to take charge for the present of the Tribe in Sweden. During our deliberations on this case a word of Prophecy was spoken giving intimation of the gracious purpose of God towards Mr. MacKenzie, that if it may be possible Mr. MacKenzie may yet be brought back to his place. In our official communication to Mr. MacKenzie we have not sent him this word, nor indeed have we in express terms communicated the terms of our judgment upon his case, but we have left it to Mr. Woodhouse to communicate the same in the most suitable manner.]

In the case of Mr. Dalton we considered that as the intimation of his positive refusal to resume his duties was so recent it would not be right to adopt the precise measure applied to Mr. MacKenzie. And moreover we are convinced that the struggle between his former faith and his present doubts is not entirely over. We have therefore restricted ourselves at present to the writing to him a Letter wherein after expressing our surprize [sic] and pain at his present condition of mind, and declining to enter into controversy with him on the ground of his objections and arguments (which indeed are no other than those which we have ordinarily met with from the beginning of the work) we have appealed to his former faith and to his testimony given in common with ours to the truth of this work before the whole world, both to the Church of England and to the

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Universal Church, and in no spirit of vain boasting but for his deliverance, we have declared and testified that the arguments drawn from the low estate of things in 1846, notwithstanding our shortcomings in the meantime, do not apply to the present. And after referring to the gracious intimation of long-suffering which had been given to us in Mr. MacKenzie[']s case we have warned him of his danger and entreated him to return to his place and duty.

* [I wish that it were in my power to enable you to read this Letter in all the Churches, but I think that feelings of delicacy towards Mr. Dalton prevent us from making copies of it or parting with it from our own custody. I wish it, because the spirit which breathes through this document and the words in which it is expressed are a Testimony to the unanimous and

abiding faith of the Apostles and of their assurance of God's presence and guidance of us during the last five years which would comfort, strengthen and rejoice the hearts of all that should hear it. I propose however now to read it to you, and to those Angels not now present I will give the opportunity of reading it whenever they can see me for that purpose]

In concluding this communication I have two remarks of some importance to submit to you.

I am aware that there are some among us who entertain the idea that there is a possibility of some summary process by which recusant Apostles may be deprived of their Office, and their places filled up. That God may be pleased by some immediate act of His own thus to execute deserved judgment I am neither careful nor willing to deny. Nor is it necessary for me, nor would it be expedient or proper, to enter upon

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the consideration of so important a question in this place. And if not expedient for me here, I am sure that it would be neither more expedient nor more proper for any others in any place within my jurisdiction. – One thing only let me observe, that this question is one of which the determination peculiarly belongs to the Apostles, and to them alone. Nor could they proceed to any such judicial act on any other ground (whether the supposed light of words of prophecy or any motives of expediency) except upon a clear and distinct persuasion of their own powers to do such act.

We have also need to guard ourselves on another point. God's perfect ordinance for perfecting His Church is a College of Apostles under Christ, consisting of not less than twelve. By this number only, so far as we know or expect, will the twelve Tribes of the Spiritual Israel be gathered, and the whole Church united as One to be prepared for the first Resurrection. And as the hope of the resurrection, so also the perfect ordinances of the Church ought to be the unceasing object of our desires and prayers. But it does not follow that when at any time God is pleased that the Apostles or at least those of them actively engaged in their duties should be fewer in number than Twelve, the Office and its powers and authority are in any wise weakened in the hands of the faithful remainder. They may be hindered in the extent to which they can carry the work, but we ought not to think that to that extent they are in any respect inadequate either to administer the supply of the grace and gift of the Holy Ghost to the faithful or to the guidance and government of the Church. When St. James the less was slain by the hand of Herod I am quite unable to say that the Apostleship

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to the Circumcision became inadequate to its ordinary duties towards the Infant church. When St. Paul was sent to the Gentiles, with St. Barnabas his Companion, I am quite unable to say that because the gentile Church could not be perfected but by Twelve therefore the Apostolic Office was defective for its then present work in the hands of Paul. On the contrary, he expressly claims the completeness of Apostolic power and authority to have been committed to him by God.

Apostles sent forth not by man, but by God and by the Lord Jesus Christ are essential to the existence of the Church in the full grace of the gospel, for administering and supplying the gift of the Holy Ghost. Twelve Apostles are necessary for the gathering and bringing up of the Twelve Tribes of the Lord, and for perfecting the whole Church in one. So also as we have been taught are the complete number in the other Ministries. but if in the early growth or partial development of God's reviving work the number be incomplete I believe it to be an error calculated to sap our faith that we should suppose the grace of Apostleship in the incomplete number is either inferior in itself or essentially hindered in its operation so far as respects the well being of those who abide faithful.

Let us rejoice in God's present grace and long for the time when the whole Church, complete in every part shall be presented spotless and blameless in the presence of the Lord.

And not the less on this account, rather the more, not from regard to our own real or supposed preferment but for love will we approach the Altar of God with continual and earnest prayer that He will be pleased to turn the hearts of these our Fathers and bring

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them back to the fellowship of the duties and labours to which in common with the rest of their brethren they have been called and separated.

The Apostles during their recent sittings have also seen fit to continue to me the charge of the Churches in London. And whereas previously that charge had been restricted to the next Meeting of the Apostles, and therefore ceased when they re-assembled, they have now left it without any such restriction, so that the charge will continue unless the Apostles shall see fit to make any other arrangement. This charge I willingly undertake, trusting that through the mercy of God His grace may enable me more adequately to fulfil it and that my endeavours may meet the same affectionate and dutiful response as has been hitherto rendered me by those entrusted to my care.

Our object must be to gather the wanderers and those who need especial spiritual care, and to make all God's Children partakers with us of the same grace and of the same ever instant hope. And in order thereto the first and immediate object upon our hearts must be the restoration of the Church in Westminster, and the perfecting of God's ordinances in every respect in all the Churches. In the five years which have now nearly elapsed since September 1846 I think it is not an exaggeration to say that our members, reckoning those who are really faithful and zealous have been about doubled. May God grant us all zeal and earnestness and fruit of our labours an hundred fold. And let us remember that we can none of us tell how soon the night shall come when no man can work and how terrible is that temptation ready to fall as a Net upon all our Brethren around us.

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I have now to proceed to another subject not unconnected with what I have just said. I have upon several occasions sought to define the true Nature of our Meetings on every fourth Tuesday, that it was under a former Resolution of the apostles authorizing and appointing me to gather the Churches for worship, and with the three Pillars for ministering instruction in the Seven Churches. I have been careful therefore to point out that this Meeting is rather a provision for training for our future work – for training the Seven Churches that they may hereafter fulfil their place when brought together in one, and meeting as the Council in Zion. For that end I deem it to be most important that the Seven Angels and the Five Pillars should be present on all occasions, that any who are hindered by illness or the service of the Church should be represented by their Helps or Coadjutors; and if they have no Coadjutors, then that their places may be filled up, those of the Angels of Churches by Angels of the pastoral Ministry serving as Angels in London, and those of the Five Pillars, (this we have never been able to do, but I am stating the principle), by Angel Evangelists who also may be serving in London at the time.

Then secondly, the appointment of Ministers serving in London, whether in the Universal or in the particular Church, lies with the Apostle in charge, and this must necessarily be so: it is essential to right government, and the fulfilling of our work. But all such appointments must receive confirmation before Ministers so appointed could appear in the Council of the Seven Churches whenever it may assemble. I am careful to point out this that we may learn to discriminate, and not interfere with the prerogative of the Apostles over that Corporate Body; - the Seven Churches united in One, not as Seven distinct Churches,

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but as the Seven united in One. For this end I wish to give you the following direction, to be acted upon in future, namely, - that when any of the Angels who may have Coadjutors may be absent, such Coadjutor shall not take the place of the principal without receiving authority either written or oral from me. All that would be necessary in case of no written instructions would be for the proper party to come to me and receive my immediate instructions. This I wish to be observed that it may be kept in mind that the permanent appointment of Ministers to appear in the seven Churches must receive the confirmation of the Apostles. The same rule will apply to the Senior Angel who should serve in the place of an absent angel when there is no Coadjutor.

An Angel having enquired whether it might not be advantageous to Churches newly forming if there were a general depôt for vestments which the Churches they belonged to might not continue to use; - the Apostle answered that vestments so to be disposed should be sent to his Arch Deacon.

Mr. Dowglasse, Five Pillar Evangelist, having expressed the need he again felt that some fund should be placed at the disposal of the Evangelists for the relief of poor Priests from the Church of Rome of whom there were several instances now in his hands of the greatest urgency, the Apostle most earnestly commended to the Angels the duty of exhorting their Churches to provide funds for this object.

[The End]