

Excerpts of a Letter, A. H. Rule published in "Words Of Faith", 1882

"The Lord has been giving blessing in the young little gathering here, so that two have been added since I went away, and they seem to be nice earnest souls, now feeding on the Word. I do think that the Lord has given us an open door here, and I trust there may yet be much larger blessing through the Word. There is evidently inquiry, and desire after the truth, while there is also bitter opposition on the part of those who are afraid of having their ranks broken into. But one need not mind this, as it only shows the truth is taking effect. And it is a good thing not to allow ourselves to meet those who oppose, on their own ground.

I believe we need to keep the body of Christ before us, and seek to build up the saints simply as belonging to that, wherever they may be found. Alas! We know how the saints are scattered, but love seeks them out, and seeks to minister to them, because they are Christ's. I find it very easy to sink down into a kind of sectarian spirit, while the ground may be held intellectually clear enough. It is easy to be seeking to build up something that is for man's eye. May the Lord keep us from having our hearts set on anything but that which He loves-the Church for which He gave Himself.

How true it is that apart from Him we can do nothing. And have we not much lacked the sense of dependence on Him? And instead of pursuing the lowly path of Him who could say, "I am a worm, and no man," we have thought ourselves to be something, and exalted ourselves-alas! only to be abased. But how much better mercy that He should abase us now, than allow us to go on in pride of heart! He brings us low that He may lift us up in the sense of His own wonderful grace.

I have thought that perhaps many of us have not sufficiently realized the utter ruin of all that has been committed to man's responsibility. We have spoken and written of the 'ruin of the Church', while secretly in our own hearts we are priding ourselves that at least there was one little circle where all was right, and we are in that. It is a kind of 'Brethrenism'.

Of course, God's Word and truth change not, and it ever remains true that where two or three are gathered to Christ's name there He is "in the midst" of them. The truth is as simple, and the path as plain as ever it was, and thus there is ever a resource for faith. But if pride is lurking in our hearts, thinking we are all right, and that "Brethren" are a kind of asylum into which the people of God are to be gathered, where they can be in safe keeping, and cared for till the Lord comes, surely that is not learning well the truth of the Church's ruin. And has there not been more of this than perhaps we are aware of? And therefore God is allowing us to learn the ruin of the Church among ourselves, as well as our folly in setting up to be anything. Oh! May we learn the lesson well, that Christ may become everything to us, not only an object of our hearts individually, but the center to which we gather, and the One who can never fail, but who, in spite of the Church's failure, and even of apostasy which threatens everything, "*is able to keep us from falling and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.*"

The way we have to learn these things, because of our pride and foolishness, is indeed humbling, and we might well take up the lamentation of David, "*How are the mighty fallen! Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest ... the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughter of the uncircumcised triumph*" (2 Sam. 1:19,20). But it is better to learn the lesson at whatever cost, and however great the humiliation may be; it is our blessing surely to learn it, and we can have confidence, too, in Him whose grace can never fail, and who loves all His people with an imperishable love."