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A CAUTION

TO THE READERS OF

“A CAUTION AGAINST THE DARBYITES.”

WITH A FEW WORDS ON

“THE CLOSE OF TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS’

ASSOCIATION WITH J. N. D.”

BY

JOHN JEWELL PENSTONE.

OXFORD.

LONDON:

G. MORRISH, 24, WARWICK LANE,

PATERNOSTER ROW. E. C.

Price Twopence.



A CAUTION,

ETC.

[THE following pages would never have been printed if I had merely consulted my own wishes, for I much love all the parties concerned, and have waited in anxious hope that the course of animosity against Mr. Darby, which has been so unrelentingly pursued, would be ceased from—but I have hoped in vain.

For without doubt, animosity against Mr. D. has led some otherwise excellent and honourable men into a path of misrepresentation which has been coolly persevered in even after such evidence as any candid enquirer would require at their hands had entirely broken down.]

LATE in the Autumn of 1866, during a meeting at Exeter, circumstances transpired which brought forcibly to my mind the recollections of thirty years since, when, from a beloved and aged servant of Christ, Joseph Jewell, I first heard of the meetings of the Brethren, and became acquainted with Mr. John Eliot Howard, among many others.

For Mr. H. and those connected with him I have an unfeigned regard; and I feel deepest sorrow at the thought of whither they have drifted since those days. Nor could I refrain from writing to him expressing that sorrow; and entreating him, as one Christian may

entreat another, to reconsider before God the course he had taken.*

As a reply, Mr. Howard forwarded to me the second edition of his pamphlet, "A Caution against the Darbyites," etc.

I carefully read the "Caution;" for I felt bound in conscience, in these sorrowful days, to hear what any whom I still considered servants of the Lord Jesus Christ might have to say. If they called us "Darbyites" or by any other name, *that* would not make us otherwise than we are: we must bear hard usage for our Master's sake; and oftentimes, alas! there is no blow so hard, or struck so fiercely, as that from an offended brother's hand.

The "Caution against the Darbyites" professes to be an account of certain things which have transpired, and doctrines which have been taught among the brethren. It gives names, dates, letters, and references to authorities freely; so that the reader is made to understand that he is not being occupied with the sneer of the satirist, or the mockery of the mere man of the world, but with a collection of well authenticated *facts* and documents; and on this ground the writer claimed from us that respect and attention which is due to an earnest-minded writer, who is both a gentleman and a scholar. This attention I have given him, considering myself bound to concede it until he shall have proved

* To have taken any copy of this letter, as well as of a subsequent one, would have been entirely unnecessary, and being simply personal appeals, there would be no justification for inserting them in the present correspondence.

himself unworthy of it—which, for the love I bear towards him, will I hope never happen.

Imagine my surprise at finding in such a publication a dialogue between Diotrephes and Asyncritus, inserted as an appendix to the second edition, with the following introductory note:—

“An exact Reprint of Notes stated to be taken at the time by a third party and confirmed by Asyncritus—the names alone being fictitious.”

According to these “Notes” we are to believe that John Nelson Darby, under the name of Diotrephes, uttered or endorsed such statements as the following:—

“That if an assembly err we must still accept its action as that of the Holy Ghost; although THE LORD may shew us that its judgment was a wrong one, because we are told to ‘Hear the Church.’

“And that every other assembly is bound to bow to that erroneous judgment, because under the circumstances, the Lord *prefers* an error of judgment to be propagated *rather than the truth*.”

Mr. Darby is next made to deny that the above principle assumes metropolitan infallibility:—

“Because an assembly is not infallible, though an act of an assembly may.” (*Sic.*)

He goes on:

“We are to accept what we know to be error, *as the judgment of the Holy Ghost*, although it clearly could not have been the judgment of the Holy Ghost; else we refuse to hear the Church, and despise the authority the Lord has appointed.”

“We also are to accept the *wrong* decision of any assembly who *first* judges a question although we know it to be wrong, or we deny the *unity of the body*.”

“And ‘certainly’ we ought rather to adopt an official blunder than act *upon* what we believe the Lord has shewn us to be the truth.”

Finally, Mr. D. is made to say, or endorse the statement, that

“Being bound to accept the action of an assembly as that of the Holy Ghost—in refusing to accept the action of an assembly we must first disown it, and, having no right to judge the actions of an assembly; his own practice had been never to judge but where he disowned.”

Divested of its dialogue form, the above is a correct abstract of the statements of this remarkable paper; which is the only one in Mr. Howard’s book that is put forth under assumed names, but is affirmed to us, by its introductory note, to be a faithful account of a real conversation.

I shall not think of insulting Mr. Darby by attempting to discuss one of those statements, nor the good feeling and good sense of my readers, by volunteering here any explanation, as some have, of the possible meaning or construction which might have been put upon them; neither attempt to explain to such as are wilfully ignorant the subject of the conversation, which would appear to have been the unity of the body of Christ.

But taking these statements as I find them, I consider the object avowedly of those who have made them (the “fictitious” name given to J. N. D. would, if nothing else did, tell us that). Mr. D., as I shall presently shew by the evidence of one of his adversaries, disavows them; and I deal with their existence and extensive circulation as an evident token of the moral

state of those who are taking a prominent part before the Church of God.

Were I not aware of the blinding effect of prejudice, I should be utterly at a loss to imagine how any could so ignore the very knowledge of the divine character as to conceive it possible for those with whom, they say, they once walked and took sweet counsel, to assert that GOD would sanction a falsity by His Spirit of TRUTH, rather than infringe upon a manifestation of external unity.

The total depravation of all moral feeling, which this systematic slander supposes in those who are termed "Darbyites," is so revolting, that I conceive nothing but closing the eyes against facts, and steeling the heart against affection, would allow men in their prejudices and animosities to proceed to the lengths which they have done in circulating it.

And I feel it to have become the quarrel of everyone who cares for the testimony of the Lord in these days to protest against the course which has been pursued, lest the truth of the living God as to the unity of the body of Christ should for a moment be suffered to seem, to the consciences of men to be involved with a jesuitical setting aside of the claims of truth and holiness to secure an external and seeming unity—such unity in fact as would be a defiance and mockery of divine life, divine truth, and of everything divine.

On the other hand, in Matthew xviii. we see that there is a unity of mind and purpose between heaven and earth, which comprehends within its circle the prayer and the action of the few and the feeble, as

fully as the prayers and the actions of the many; so far as the very object that God has before Him in forming an assembly upon earth at all, is kept in view; that is, that, in their actions and prayers they should not seek their own, but the things that are Jesus Christ's. The power of heaven is engaged to bind or loose, and the Father's hand is ready to bestow all that may be desired within this blessed circle. The CHRIST OF GOD in name, in person, in glory, is the spring of the power, and the blessing, and the bond of the unity down here. God owns no other. I own no other: *that* I dare not set aside.

Position and attainments make no difference here, the single eye has but one object. The greatness of our standing is, that whatever and wherever we may be, we are looking in GOD'S light at that which is His eternal purpose. Secluded within the walls of the colleges by which I am surrounded, there have been in times past, I would fain hope still are, little companies of men having every advantage of education and standing, and in the towns and villages everywhere are also knots of tradesmen, mechanics, or ploughmen, able to read their Bibles, some hardly able to do that; yet none can go with the stream, they are sighing and crying to God for the glory of their Master, Christ, and they in the sight of God are seeking to separate themselves more and more from that which is contrary to the name of their Master, Christ. The link which binds earth and heaven together hath in spirit already bound these in one common object.

And am I to be told, that when such are thus gathered for the name of the Lord Jesus, it remaineth at the

option of Mr. Howard and others, because of personal offences, to deny and withstand, separate from, and revile them? I cannot believe such a tale.

Early in November, I again wrote to Mr. Howard, giving him my impression of his work as a whole, but stating my firm conviction that with respect to the "dialogue" he must certainly have been imposed upon. Of this letter I took no copy; but Mr. H's reply to me is as follows:—

[Copy.]

Stratford, near London. E.

November 13th, 1866.

DEAR MR. PENSTONE,

You must be aware that I cannot enter into correspondence with you or recognize you, so long as you make yourself a partisan of Mr. J. N. D. and consequently a partaker of the fearful errors in *doctrine* and *practice* so ably exposed by Dorman and Hall.

But, as I wish to act in grace, and not to place any stumbling-block in your way towards that path of repentance and renewal of a right mind into which God may be leading you, I refer you as regards the *exact accuracy* of the reprint of the *Notes* which alarm you, to the Dublin brethren.

You *ought* to satisfy yourself on this matter, and I pardon you your disbelief in my truthfulness, though this does not well consist in what you say of your esteem for my character.

I refer you to Thos. Ryan, or Townsend Trench.

I remain,

Yours, &c.,

(Signed) J. E. HOWARD.

After having, as I had, appealed in all brotherly kindness and respect to the writer, I need hardly say that the reception of the above letter gave me but little

comfort ; but as he furnished me with his authorities, it gave me an opportunity of applying to Mr. Trench, to whom I addressed the following letter :—

4 *Blenheim Place, Oxford.*

November 19th, 1866.

DEAR MR. TRENCH,

My attention is called to a Pamphlet by J. E. Howard entitled "a Caution against the Darbyites," etc. Second Edition. In acknowledging its receipt, I expressed a doubt of the correctness of the report of a dialogue inserted at page 45, which I then saw for the first time.

Mr. Howard in reply refers me to you for my satisfaction.

For Mr. Howard, however we might in some important respects differ from each other, I have great regard, but he feels that an imputation has been thrown upon his integrity and truthfulness, which must be my apology for asking you to take the trouble of satisfying me.

At your earliest convenience will you remove my difficulties by answering four questions having reference to the introductory note which I give at length :—

"An exact reprint of Notes stated to be taken *at the time* by a third party and confirmed by Asyncritus, the names *alone* being fictitious."

"The names alone being fictitious" I am given to understand that the notes are in nowise so, but are to be received as a true report of the questions asked and of the answers given. Now to this reception I demur on account of the manner in which they are made public.

Will you therefore kindly tell me—

- 1st. When and where the conversation took place?
- 2ndly. The name of the note taker "at the time"?
- 3rdly. The real names of the parties in the Dialogue?
- 4thly. If the reprint is an "exact reprint" or report of what then took place?

Faithfully yours,

JOHN JEWELL PENSTONE.

To J. TOWNSEND TRENCH, Esq.

I also wrote precisely in the same terms to Mr. Thos. Ryan, at Dublin.

Mr Trench wrote in reply :

[*Copy.*]

Kenmare, November 21, 1866.

DEAR SIR,

I have not a copy of the pamphlet containing the dialogue you refer to. But if you will send me a copy I shall be happy to answer your queries seriatim.

Yours faithfully,

J. TOWNSEND TRENCH.

To J. J. PENSTONE, Esq.

I forwarded the pamphlet, and in a few days received the following :—

[*Copy.*]

Kenmare, November 30, 1866.

MY DEAR SIR,

As I was not consulted about the publication of the "Dialogue" referred to, and as Mr. Howard has not given the names of the parties concerned, I am hardly in a position to do so either.

Suffice it therefore to say that about a year ago, at Stephen's Green in Dublin, I had a conversation with J. N. D. and, while I am not aware that any full and exact report was taken of that conversation at the time [!!!], and further, while the "Dialogue" is not a *full and exact* report of that conversation, yet, in my judgment, it is as *fair and truthful* a report as such short notes permit; and, moreover, the "Dialogue" fairly gives the *substance* of that conversation.

Having said so much I must proceed to say that if any Christians of the Darbyite persuasion feel disposed to doubt what I have stated, I would ask such calmly to sit down and themselves put on paper specific answers to those questions set forth in the "Dialogue."

I have tested many in this way since I had the conversation,

but *none* have yet ventured to *put on paper* answers "seriatim" to those questions; and in this respect I look upon the questions as very important.

Whether J. N. D. *did* give those answers or not matters very little [!!!]. But whether he or his followers *can* give *any other* answers is very material.

Be assured that my only desire is the discovery and promotion of the truth.

Ever yours faithfully,

(Signed) J. TOWNSEND TRENCH.

The italics in the above letter are Mr. Trench's own.

On the letter itself I make no remarks; I imagine that the reader would feel somewhat surprised if I did.

My reply to Mr. T. is given below.

Blenheim Place, Oxford.

December 10, 1866.

MY DEAR MR. TRENCH,

I am in receipt of yours of the 30th ult. You can hardly suppose that your explanation, coupled with the extraordinary challenge to "Christians of the Darbyite persuasion," has greatly convinced me of either the *accuracy* or the candour of some of the assailants of J. N. D.

I sought simply to test the truthfulness of a report I found printed and extensively circulated in a pamphlet which professes to be neither a satire nor a slander, but to be a collection of authentic or at least easily to be authenticated facts and documents.

I find the task difficult, certainly painful; but I think it will undoubtedly "promote the truth" if I publish the correspondence.

Faithfully yours,

JOHN JEWELL PENSTONE.

To J. TOWNSEND TRENCH, Esq.

I then again wrote to Mr. Howard as follows :—

[*Copy.*]

Oxford, December 6, 1866.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

After the receipt of your letter of November 13, I applied to Mr. Ryan and also to Mr. Trench for information as to the Dialogue in your Pamphlet.

Mr. Ryan as yet has made no reply. That of Mr. Trench you have on the other side.

Can you possibly expect me to be satisfied with it?

You wished me to search out this matter that there may be no "stumbling-block" in my way, &c., &c.

The more I search the more I am stumbled—and grieved, Oh! when will these things come to an end?

Faithfully yours,

J. J. PENSTONE.

J. E. HOWARD, Esq.

Mr. Ryan's answer to my enquiry did not reach me until my correspondence with Mr. Trench on the subject had been closed—it is as follows :—

[*Copy.*]

34 Leeson Park, Dublin.

December 13, 1866.

MY DEAR MR. PENSTONE,

YOURS of November 19 should have been answered before. I was from home when it came—and with regard to that dialogue which Mr. Howard printed, it was sent me from Limerick (to be returned) and I lent it to Mr. Howard. The gentleman who had the conversation with Mr. Darby was Townsend Trench, who afterwards wanted to print them himself and sent them to Mr. Darby to correct before doing so. Mr. D. declined doing so, saying at the same time that they were not exactly what was said.

These things I told Mr. Howard, who then acted on his own responsibility.

However, there is no doubt as to the sum and substance of them, for several told me here in Dublin that he said similar things in their hearing, and it kept many from falling into the snare.

If you read an article in the *Bible Treasury* for August last on "Ecclesiastical Independency" you will see the same principles put forth—anyone who holds these principles would of course categorically reply to Mr. T.'s questions as Mr. Darby does [! !].

And I would advise you to write for a Pamphlet which will be out in a few days at Sheffield, "Letters of Mr. Darby and Mr. B. Ellis," may be had of W. H. Spurr, West St., Sheffield.

These letters contain matter just as evil and objectionable and startling as anything in Mr. Howard's tract. Proof sheets of this pamphlet were given me the other day. So I expect it will be soon out.

But the ecclesiastical matter I don't mind much, it is silly and childish, and if things only went that far it would be little matter whether people joined one kind of sect rather than another when it is mere sect as I look on it to be.

But souls, especially of the young, are injured by ignoring personal religion and making all to consist in an ecclesiastical standing.

This is the worst of it and is characteristic and stamped indelibly on the system. There are other things even more grave. The leaders are now breaking down in doctrine even foundation doctrine.

On this subject you will also see a new tract soon by M. Guinaud of Geneva. It is being translated and Mr. R. Howard will publish it.

I remain yours,

Very sincerely,

T. RYAN.

To JOHN JEWELL PENSTONE, *Oxford*.

The reader will perceive that both these gentlemen, in replying to my questions, depart from the subject in hand in an uneasy manner, as quickly as possible, and seek to occupy my attention with what they consider *ought* to have been said, &c. ; and I am invited by one to put better words than have been put into Mr. Darby's mouth, if *I can*. A strange proposition to make to an enquirer into a question strictly of evidence. I cannot help thinking that even Mr. Howard himself would be exceedingly dissatisfied with them both if they were sitting in a court of law, to investigate a question of patent right or any other question wherein he was personally concerned, if they proposed to *receive* evidence upon the same principles as they here give it.

I certainly think they owe an apology to Mr. Howard for having misled him so far as they have done, and I am sure that Mr. Howard owes an apology to the whole Church of God everywhere, for the rashness with which, in his zeal to overwhelm J. N. D., he adopted their report, and publicly put it forth as an "exact reprint of notes stated to be taken *at the time* by a *third party* and *confirmed* by Asyncritus."

How far many other reports which it has been my fate to hear would stand investigation in this day of bitter calumny, it is not for me to say ; but there is a deepening conviction in my mind that the command, "Prove all things," was never more needed for the saints than at the present moment ; nevertheless, "in quietness and confidence shall our strength be."

I would, if possible, bury all in oblivion that has transpired, and thankfully embrace those beloved

brethren in that act of fellowship which links together the living family of God.

But this cannot be, must not be, for the sake of that Church which is so dear to the heart of our beloved Master, that holiness without which there can be no delight in His presence, and that love which "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the *truth*."

Yet my soul longs for their deliverance from the snare into which I cannot suffer them to drag others.

Years have rolled away since one of these brethren, at the close of a discussion, in Orchard Street, London, on the "Bethesda question," which had been painfully protracted (as was then usual) far into the night, said to me, as we were passing out of the meeting, "It is of no use resisting, for brethren are determined no longer to submit to the dictations of John Darby and George Wigram." I was shocked at the moment, but thankful for the avowal; I removed my household soon afterwards far away from the scene, and *made no more resistance*. I then learnt a lesson which I have remembered to this day; and I took care ever afterwards how I suffered men to detain me from my family until midnight, professing the discussion of important principles, when the real object sought was the destruction of personal influence without a cause.

Nor could I forget that solemn, searching passage in the Psalms, "They only consult to cast a man down from his excellency," &c. (Ps. lxii. 4.)

Sorrowful as it is to be reminded of it by the conduct of those who are dear to us for eternity, for whom Christ hath died, and in whom His grieved Spirit dwells.

ON "THE CLOSE OF TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS'
ASSOCIATION WITH J. N. D., ETC. BY W. H. D."

I have no intention now to enter into any lengthened examination of this book, to reply to it is needless, for the best reply to the book *is* the book; but I can truly affirm that when it first came into my hands I gave it a sorrowful, patient, and prayerful perusal, and after a life of no little disappointment and trial, never before had I my confidence in men so shaken as W. H. D. has succeeded in shaking it.

Has my beloved brother at Clifton considered what he has done? Is he satisfied with his work? Has he well weighed its results to himself and to the Church of God?

The field is left to himself; he can in triumph walk over the course with all the *eclat* of a successful controversialist. Yet, if he be the man I still take him to be, let him win but another such a victory, and he is undone.

He has smitten the men from whom, twenty-eight years ago, he received light as to the "way of truth in evil times," and they do not resist, not even reply to him; and having done this to whom does he appeal—to whom cry "plaudite" for his reward—but to such as have said before now that his course was that of a fanatic, and who treated his words as the ravings of a madman?

I do not envy him his present feelings; I would far rather be the object of his censure, and the butt for his ridicule, than reason with his weapons, and follow in his course to the greatest controversial triumph ever obtained.

His book may be advertised in railway guides, lauded in religious newspapers, and applauded in dissenting chapels; but if the faithful to the Lord pursue him with

their prayers, the time is not far distant when his own hands will be the first to commit it to the flames, with an abhorrence greater than anyone else cares to express.

He reminds us of the sacrifices he has made for the sake of "principles"—he may grave them if he pleases upon a pillar of salt; *our* pathway must *needs* be one of suffering and rejection in such an age as this; but instead of the dolorous cry of "giving up" and "losing," I would, if I could, teach my dear brother to sing the cheery, happy note of another, who says,

"Tis the treasure I've found in His love,
That has made me a pilgrim below."

I will never for a moment consent to make the sufferings of our beloved Lord the subject of such a controversy as the adversary is desirous of provoking. Those who have been privileged, through the perusal of J. N. D.'s writings, or by whatever means, in solemn, holy fear, yet with peaceful, adoring hearts, to be occupied with their Lord in a path of suffering which He trod *in unclouded fellowship with His Father*, have a fellowship too high and sympathies too sacred to be drawn aside into an arena, where men contend for the mastery, and where the mere theological critic and disputant shall count no subject too holy to be exempted from the rude, free handling of the human mind.

But when I find Mr. D., after taking the unholy step of separation from his brethren, after inviting public attention everywhere to his step, and thrusting the subject of our Lord's sufferings before the notice of all in his well advertised and extensively circulated pamphlet—I say, when I find him asserting that he "will not reply" if he should be *so unfortunate* as to

provoke any answer to his statements, because the subject is "too sacred for controversy," &c.—I must take leave to declare that I consider it to be a mere subterfuge on his part, an *unworthy* one, if I think of his own gifts and power, and a *cowardly* one if I consider the way in which, by means of this very subject, he has attacked and sought to wound others.*

I love him as much as ever in the Lord, and would he suffer me, would do anything in my power to help him in this unhappy state of things; but he challenges me to his position, and I love the body of Christ too well to take it. I own Mr. Dorman as Christ's servant, and I *may* want his ministry; he is a member of the body of Christ, and I *must* need his fellowship; but he tells me that neither is to be had unless I take his position. I am compelled therefore to search out how he came there, for there is such a word as "There is one body and one Spirit." But he will discuss this no more with me; I must *come to him* first: this I am not prepared to do. He publishes a book in which he gives me not Mr. Darby's doctrine on the suffering of Christ, but his own impressions: these I am not prepared to receive. That which is to me the question of the living God among His people in these days, *The unity and fellowship* of the

* Mr. D. greatly triumphs over his misuse of the passage 1 John ii. 24. I would only just remind his readers of what he has forgotten, that is, that those to whom the apostle then wrote could hardly *from the beginning* have been instructed in the sufferings of Christ out of the New Testament, seeing that the NEW TESTAMENT was not written at the time. They must therefore, if taught in the word of God at all, have been instructed as the apostles themselves were at the first from the prophets and the Psalms the things concerning Himself. (Luke xxiv. 44.)

body of Christ, he has been pleased to make a mere question of "*association*" with certain persons in ministries, &c. ; and seeks to link me with his act of judgment upon them, when he is pleased to part company with them, at the cost of that which is most dear to my soul upon earth ; this price I am not prepared to pay, should not be even were I agreed with him in his views of Mr. Darby's doctrine, which I never can be.

I too am Christ's servant, and trying to the spirit as it may be sometimes to have to do so, I can go on in my path of service without of necessity having what Mr. Dorman terms "*association*" either with himself or Mr. Darby ; but as members of the body of Christ I cannot, ought not, to think of doing without them for a single hour : what things may prevent or hinder *association* together I may reckon so far a *loss* to myself that which shall sever us from communion, I account a *robbery* of Christ

Sad indeed does it make me to speak of these good men as I have spoken ; but can I possibly do otherwise ? I would to God that I could. The Lord pardon me if I have said anything of them which ought not to have been said ; but He knows that I sought to serve His Church in what I have said. And with one word I will conclude. I have less confidence in good men when the simple principles of the word of God, which they had once tasted and handled, are departed from, than I have in indifferent ones : the last may be blind themselves, but the first are not only *that*, but they insist on all around becoming *blind* also.

(2nd Epistle of John, Verse 8)

G. Morrish, Printer, 24, Warwick Lane, Paternoster Row, E. C

