

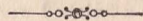
BRETHRENISM;—
ITS ATTRACTIONS, ITS EVIL,
AND
ITS REMEDY.

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None who know anything of Brethrenism, as it is called, will deny that it has its attractions—peculiar attractions too, otherwise so many of the best and most active members of the various denominations would not be drawn to it. It is but fair, then, that we should give Brethren their due, and we may, just for a little, notice some of those truths which make them so attractive, and afterwards point out the evil and the remedy.

There is no doubt that the very great prominence Brethren give to the name and person of the Lord Jesus Christ tends to draw spiritually minded people to them. It is all Christ with these Brethren; and ministry which has not Christ for its leading subject, goes for nought with them. It is Christ personally for salvation—Christ personally for their walk, and Christ by and bye in glory. Hence the soul that is truly and spiritually active is easily led aside by these Brethren and their ministry.

The Gospel they preach has its peculiar attractions, it is the Gospel of the *Grace* of God, as continually announced on their bills, and that in opposition to *law*. They are terribly

opposed to preaching the law, saying, that it entered that sin might be known, (Rom. iii. 20,) that the offence might abound, (Rom. v. 20,) and that by the *commandment* sin might become exceeding sinful. (Rom. vii. 13.) It is the gospel of the *grace* of God, (Acts xx. 24,) that is now to be preached. Christ has come full of grace and truth, and through His death and resurrection, grace triumphing over every difficulty, now *reigns* through righteousness. (Rom. iii. 21.) This Gospel takes all the work from the sinner and puts it on the Son of God. Brethren say, that Christ's work was a finished work. That He was not received into heaven until he had accomplished the work He came to do, but that when, not before, He had by Himself purged our sins *sat down* on the right hand of the Majesty on high. (Heb. i. 3.) On the cross He said it is finished, and He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. (Heb. ix. 26.) Christ having thus received the wages of sin, which is death, God is just in pardoning and justifying all the ungodly who believe in Jesus. (Rom. iii. 26.) Without the shedding of blood there is no remission, but by the shedding of the blood of the Son of God sin has been put away, and eternal redemption obtained, (Heb. ix. 12,) redemption from wrath, from sin, from the world, from Satan, and that he who owns the blood as shed for him, is cleansed from all sin, is as white as snow. (Isaiah i. 18.) He is justified too by the blood. (Rom. v. 9.) Peace also having been made by the blood of His cross, (Col. i. 20,) the believer being justified by faith, has peace with God, (Rom. v. 1,) and thus it is you will ever find these Brethren have the enjoyment of peace in their souls, knowing that all their sins are washed away, yea more, that they *are* justified before God; (1 Cor. vi.) they have what they are pleased to call a purged conscience, (Heb. ix. 14,) that is a conscience telling them that God's

justice has been satisfied, and that all that He had against them is for ever put away—that there is no condemnation because His Son has borne all their sins and the condemnation due to them. This is a very great matter with them. On this account they decline to pray for peace, because they have got it. They will not pray to be delivered from eternal wrath and damnation, because they are delivered from the wrath to come, (Thess. i. 10,) and say they, it is not an intelligent thing to ask God to give them that which they have. They will not say that they are miserable sinners, because they are *happy Christians*.

This is again another feature of attraction in them, they are happy in Christ, free from all doubts and fears, for they have entrusted the salvation of their souls to Him who is mighty to save, and in whom they have perfect confidence—for salvation they trust wholly and solely to the finished work of the Lord Jesus. The price He has paid for their redemption they say is enough. The price was the death of God's Son.

Then the teaching of these Brethren, as to what they call their *present* death and resurrection with Christ, is peculiarly interesting and attractive. They show that the nature they have received from Adam is altogether corrupt—*altogether* gone from original righteousness, having not a trace of goodness in it, in fact, it is dead in trespasses and sin, (Eph. i. 2,) incapable of doing one good act, (Rom. 7, 18,)—having no good desire towards God, but on the contrary, bad and evil desires. In consequence of this state of things man must be born again. He cannot be improved or made better, he must be born anew and be made a new creation (2 Cor. v. 17,) otherwise he has no

power to see much less to enter into the kingdom of heaven. But then Christ has come—the last Adam as head of a new creation. He was crucified, and not only did He there bare our sins, but the old Adam creation was judged there too. Our old man was *crucified with Christ* that the *body* of sin might be destroyed in order that we might not serve sin. (Rom. vi. 6.) In His resurrection Christ became the Head of the new creation, and by the power of God He was raised up and made to sit in heaven above all principalities, and powers, and dominions, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come. (Eph. i. 21.) The believer in Jesus is quickened together with Him, and this is accomplished by the *workmanship of God*, (Eph. ii. 10,) a *new* creation. He is created in Christ Jesus, and the union and identification of the believer with Christ is most close and intimate. The old creation, and its accomplishments, are passed away—all things with the new creation become new—new hopes, desires, affections, &c., &c. In this new birth is involved the *formation* of Christ in the believer, Christ liveth in Him. (Gal. ii., 21.) I travail in birth until Christ be *formed* in you, writes Paul to the failing Galatians. (Gal. iv, 19.)

In this new birth the believer has the power to hold communion with God. He can now say Oh God! thou art my God, my soul longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is. All fear is removed, for God's perfect love casts out all fear, and he who is thus saved has boldness to enter into the presence of God within a rent veil. (Heb. x. 19, 20.) How different was it with the Jew under law. It was all fear and dread, smoke and storm, and thunder and clouds, and darkness, so that Moses said I do exceedingly fear and quake. (Heb. xii. 21.) But grace has put all this

away and the believer can now approach God and joy *in Him*, (Rom. v. 11,) yea the nearer he approaches and the closer his communion, the deeper, the fuller, and richer will be his joy, —joy unspeakable and full of glory. It is Divine joy too, for Jesus says *my* joy shall remain in you. (John xv. 11.)

There is yet a further truth these Brethren teach which has its special power of attraction, and especially to those who are truly spiritually minded, I allude to what they call the *heavenly* calling of the believer. Paul speaks of them being made partakers of the *heavenly* calling. (Heb. iii. 1.) The Jew was called by an earthly calling to an earthly place, for earthly blessings and privileges. But these Brethren tell us that we who believe are better off than the saints amongst Israel, for we are made partakers of a *heavenly* calling, and as to earth we are to be strangers and pilgrims. (1 Peter ii. 11.) We are to have no abiding city here, for our citizenship is in *heaven*, (Phil. iii. 20), and heaven is our home. (John xiv. 3.) The believer's position, and standing before God is that of one accepted in the beloved. (Eph. i. 6.) They are made to sit together in Christ in the *heavenlies*. (Eph. ii. 6.) His portion too is in Christ in the *heavenlies*, which is nothing less than every spiritual blessing. (Eph. i. 3.) As to the world, he is not of it, *even as* Christ was not of it. (John 17, 14.) He is in it a light to bear testimony for a despised and rejected Christ, and that in fellowship with the Holy Ghost who has been given as an *abiding* comforter. (John xiv. 16, xv. 26, 27.)

These Brethren seeing that their place and portion is in Christ, in whom all the fulness of the Godhead bodily dwells, will own no other name amongst men than the name and person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is the

gathering centre. (Matt. 18, 20.) It is Himself they are called upon to follow and therefore they say that they ought to go outside the camp unto Him bearing His reproach. (Heb. xiii. 13.)

The very special and prominent place they give to the Word of God is very remarkable and attractive. They will have nothing but that which one can give chapter and verse for. Creeds and articles of man's framing they throw overboard, and, "what saith the Lord," is their rule.

The place they give too, to the Holy Ghost has its attraction. They teach that they cannot say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost. (1 Cor. xii. 3.) They cannot worship without Him, (John iv. 23,) they cannot be led into truth without Him, (John xvi. 13,) they cannot see Jesus or anything about Him without the Holy Ghost, (John xvi, 14,) they cannot grow like Jesus except by his power, (2 Cor. iii. 18,) therefore say these Brethren it is their duty and necessity for blessing to give full place, authority, and liberty to the Holy Ghost.

But I have now written quite enough on the attractions of Brethren. One cannot deny them to be such, and one cannot be surprised that so many Godly saints are captivated by them. But it is time I referred to the great evil of Brethrenism. Brethren make their attacks on the Godly amongst the various denominations, and disturb their minds. Ministers bitterly complain of this, saying it is a shame to disturb and unsettle the minds of their flocks. This is one great evil of Brethren, if they come in contact with a christian they are sure to make him think, and they excite in him the spirit of the Bereans who were more

noble than those of Thessalonica because these received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily to see whether the things that they heard were according to the mind of God. It was no matter to the Bereans who preached to them. What the preacher said, they tested by the Word. Now I say this is the effect of Christians coming in contact with the so-called Plymouth Brethren. They are pretty sure to get to the Word of God, to see whether the religion they are connected with is according to God. It is not enough for the Godly ones to know that their fathers were brought up in it, it is not enough for them to know that this good minister says it is all right, but they come to the Scriptures to see the mind of God. Then presently they begin to see that God does not dwell in temples made with hands, but in a spiritual house, composed of spiritual stones, sinners saved by grace. They see too that *all* believers are priests to God, (1 Peter 2,) and that anything like a humanly ordained priesthood is all wrong. They learn too that he knoweth not what to pray for of himself and therefore God has sent the Holy Ghost to help his infirmities, and to teach him to pray according to God. (Rom. viii. 27.) So that it is wrong to have men *set apart* to read a form of prayers, or even to pray without a book, for he may not be in a spirit of prayer. These Brethren say that a man is not always in a condition to pray, and therefore it is all wrong to set a man apart and pay him to pray and to teach when he is not in a state to do it, and the more so when it is the office of the Holy Ghost to divide to every man severally as *He will*. (1 Cor. xii. 11.)

From this they begin to see that the stated and humanly ordained ministry is not of God, neither according to His mind, and therefore it ought not so to be. Then again

they see that the table on which the memorial of the body and blood of Christ are placed is not, as it ought to be, the Lord's table. They see that it is the table of the state, the parish, or else of the minister. At all events it is not the Lord's, for He, as Lord, is not owned; for if indeed He Himself came into the place where the supper was being administered He could not dare to touch the bread or wine, or in any way take part in ministry, because the rules and regulations are such that none but the man appointed shall minister. Thus the Lord Jesus is not allowed to preside at that which ought to be *his own* table. The Holy Ghost too, is put on one side, for where He to use anyone of the congregation to pray, or to give out a hymn, or speak a word to edification, that man would be taken up as a brawler, and punished accordingly. These are the things that these Brethren put before the godly saints, and so their consciences become exercised before God as to the truth of His Word, and finally seeing so much evil in the denomination to which they belong they cease to do evil and wait on God to teach them to do well. This is considered a great evil because it weakens "*the cause.*" The remedy however is very simple.

All that has to be done is to keep the minds of the people in the dark and away from the word of God. Keep the Scriptures as much as possible a sealed book, and let the ministers preach so as to make their hearers comfortable and they will not forsake "*the cause.*" But the moment the Godly begin to ask themselves is this according to God? Have I scripture for that? or have I God's mind about something else that I am practising in my religion? then there is danger, great danger. Keep them however from a spirit of inquiry and you have a *certain remedy for Brethrenism.* Some time since I heard that an address, bearing the title of this paper, had been delivered by a clergyman in London,

but on enquiry finding that it was a hole and corner affair thought it might be well to give my experience of the attractions, the evils, and the remedy of Brethrenism, desiring to be as wise as a serpent but as harmless as a dove, and that for the Glory of God. Surely one would from love to Christ, gladly spend and be spent for one's brethren in Christ, wherever they may be, though the more abundantly one does love the less I be loved.



“ Christ died for our sins.”—(1 Cor. xv. 3.)
“ The Blood of Jesus Christ (God's Son) cleanseth us from all sin.”—(1 John i. 7.)