

THE

EXCLUSIVE BRETHREN:

THEIR ORIGIN AND DISCIPLINE.

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THE EXCLUSIVE BRETHREN,

&c., &c.

INTRODUCTION.

Of late years we have had times of revival in these lands. Many dead souls have been quickened to life, and many more who were spiritually alive, have been stirred up to new activity and zeal. Not a few such, as is natural, are now inquiring their duty about Church relationships. They cannot rest satisfied with mere educational beliefs on such subjects, but feel bound to "search the Scriptures," and accept nothing on tradition. They feel cast on the Lord and on their own resources for the discovery of the truth, and are trying to cut their own path through the dense forest of Church questions and difficulties, independent of the roads opened by those who have gone before.

It is a time, therefore, replete with danger. What wonder if many such should soon find themselves entangled in thickets of unprofitable questions, or stuck fast in quagmires of insoluble doubts and difficulties? May the Good Shepherd keep His sheep, for none but He can preserve them in such a season of peril! May He stir up prayer for this, and give to His own true under-shepherds watchfulness over the flock, and, to His people whose minds may be thus exercised, patience, wisdom, and humility; preserving them from *haste*, for "He that hasteth with his feet sinneth;" and from *self-confidence*, for "He that leaneth to his own understanding is a fool;" and from *self-will*, which is always lawlessness or sin. Oh! for more of the spirit of subjection to the Lord, and to one another in the fear of the Lord, especially to those whom He has constituted guides and under-shepherds in the flock. We are not left to choose our own way and please ourselves

in these matters. We are not at liberty to follow the dictates of mere reason, or the inclinations of self-will. God has clearly revealed His mind and His will in Scripture. Subjection to it is our duty, and insubordination to it, sin.

That revelation comprises both *rules* for the government and ordering of the Church, and *principles*, which, apprehended by the spiritual mind, guide, like an unfailing clue, amid labyrinths of circumstantial details and practical difficulties.

Prominent and important among these principles is that of the Oneness of the Body of Christ, the precious truth that all His members are one with Him, and therefore one with each other in a real and living bond which nought can break. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into *one body*." This great truth has, thank God, been markedly revived in the days in which we live: its glorious results are proclaimed and felt in a way they once were not. It has been *the* truth which has characterized the present revival more, perhaps, than any other; just as the truth of justification by faith characterized the revival of the sixteenth century, and the cardinal doctrine of regeneration that under the ministry of Whitfield and the Wesleys.

The Lord has been graciously leading His people to a fresh realization of *their oneness in Christ*, and to a desire for its outward manifestation. As the rising tide fills the separate pools on the beach, makes them overflow and merge into one, so the natural result of a fuller flow of spiritual life has been a tendency among Christians of all sects and parties to commingle more freely, to love more sincerely, to unite more cordially in worship and in work, and to manifest more openly the *oneness* they have, and know they have, and rejoice to know they have *in Christ*. Witness the undenominational conferences, the evangelical alliances, the believers' meetings, the united prayer, so common now, so rare in former days. But the enemy who sowed tares, and who seeks to withstand or neutralize every operation of the Spirit of God, has not failed to try to mar His work, and oppose His Spirit in this case also. The wily demon of party spirit is contending for the mastery, and finds, alas! a strong ally in the flesh even of the best of us. A chilly sectarianism is perceptibly regaining ground in certain quarters—of course under a new and specious guise. The warm glow of love and brotherly kindness is cooling; speculative and unlearned questions, and strifes of words, are

beginning to replace sweet fellowship about "Jesus only;" *unanimity* on all minor points is found to be impossible (as it ever must and will be till we all come to a perfect man) and *union* is, alas! endangered in consequence. Our oneness in Christ is less realized and less manifested. Thereby the father of discord and all evil is rejoiced. Thereby the Holy Spirit of God is grieved.

The last state of the man who has once held and then abandoned any important revealed truth is worse than the first. There is danger of those who were but lately champions for the glorious truth of the oneness of believers in Christ becoming more sectarian than others who have never seen the evil of sectarianism.

A small modern section of the Church, which, though it holds much truth, yet unites it, alas! with most erroneous views as to discipline, is a sad and striking instance of this. We allude to the body known as the "Exclusive Brethren," and we feel it incumbent on us at the present time to bring the sectarian and exclusive principles of this body to the touchstone of Scripture. We do so for the sake of those who hold them, knowing that truth is stronger than error, and that honest, earnest Christians only need to see what is truth, in order to act according to it: and also, for the sake of the many young believers of the present day, who, ignorant of the circumstances which gave rise to the system in question, are peculiarly liable to be misled by it, since it professes to have the glory of God, and that alone, as its object, and claims the sanction of His word; and under a deep sense of responsibility to that great and good Shepherd, who is ever grieved and dishonoured by injury done to His flock.

The precious truth of the unity of the Body of Christ is at stake. Its lustre is altogether obscured by the system to which we allude—the system whose essence it is to exclude thousands whom Christ has received, to cut off those whom He has grafted in, to sever those whom He has united, to scatter those for whom He *died* that he might gather them together in one.

Oh! in these last days, while the far greater portion of the world which God loves, and for which Christ died, is still comprised in the dark domains of heathendom, when infidelity in varied forms, is rolling her deadly waves over the greater part of Christendom, and sacramentalism or grosser superstition is

still surging over the rest ; when the enemy is coming in like a flood, and they are few by whom the Spirit of the Lord doth raise up a standard against him—is it not a device of Satan that turns the energies of servants of Christ into the channel of mutual strife, and, lest they should unite their feeble forces against the mighty common foe, engages the good soldiers of Jesus in a suicidal civil war ?

Oh ! if Evangelical Christians were only joined, hand in hand and heart with heart, in prayerful dependence on the Lord, to resist the onslaught of the powers of evil, what deliverance and enlargement might not yet arise ? The contrast between what the Church does and what she *might* do, what she *is* and what she might be, ay, and *should* be, makes the soul sink under a sense of shame, almost too intolerable to be borne ! And shall this state of things continue till the end ? Shall the Son of Man at His coming—that coming which draweth so nigh, find the servants beating and abusing each other, rather than engaged about their Master's business ? Must we still blush to behold *sinner*s *saved by one sacrifice* spurning each other, instead of sitting in sweet fellowship around the sacred memorials of dying love ? Oh, can we not unite at least in the desire, yea, in the earnest daily prayer—Gracious Master ! forgive Thy wayward servants ; and grant us, in this morning watch, when Thy coming draweth near, and the time for witness in the world is well nigh gone, O grant us grace to be one—one in heart, one in mind, one in testimony, that the world may believe Thee sent of God, and be constrained by the manifested oneness of Thy members, and their love one to another, to own Thee, their heavenly Head, as divine ! We know that Thou canst do everything ; subdue even us, then, to Thyself, according to the working of Thy mighty power, and Thine shall be the glory, world without end. Amen.

CHAPTER II.

HISTORY OF THE CASE.

LET it be clearly understood that the question we are to consider is not one of *doctrine* but one of *discipline*. The "Exclusive Brethren" cannot hold more decidedly than those who disapprove of their course, that the doctrine originally taught by Mr. B. W. Newton, of Plymouth, was unsound and dangerous. He himself has freely admitted it to have been so.* But two parties may equally reprobate an action as a crime, and yet differ as to how the criminal should be treated. The question in that case between them would not be one of morality, but one of discipline.

Two physicians might agree that a patient's limb was seriously diseased. One might advise amputation, the other constitutional treatment. The point at issue, in that case would be, *not* as to the *nature* of the disease, but as to the *treatment* to be adopted. So here, the accusation laid against the Church meeting at Bethesda, Bristol (on which the whole system of Exclusiveism rests), is not that a single person there holds false doctrine, but that seventeen years ago, they were as a Church guilty of "neutrality" in a question of heresy, and that their principles of Church fellowship are such, as to afford no sufficient protection against the entrance and spread of false doctrine.

We must first examine into the truth of this accusation, and then into the merits of the extraordinary system of discipline which the "Exclusive Brethren" have adopted with reference to it. We hope to show any unprejudiced mind, not only that this discipline is unwarrantable and unscriptural, but that the accusation itself is *unjust*. We do not say it is utterly unfounded. A basis of fact misinterpreted and misrepresented underlies most unjust accusations. The history of the case need not here be traced in detail. Its leading features may easily be stated.

The Bethesda controversy arose from the refusal of the Elders of that Church to comply with two requests or demands, which were strongly urged :—

1. That they should bring Mr. Newton's unsound and abstruse pamphlets before the Church, with a view to obtain a corporate condemnation of them.

* See Appendix A.

2. That they should excommunicate the Ebrington-street Assembly, at Plymouth, where Mr. Newton was still received as a teacher, though his peculiar views were disclaimed.*

The Elders at Bethesda did not think it well, at first, to do either, though, under altered circumstances, they subsequently did the first, and to a great extent the second also.

It was not from sympathy with the evil doctrine, or with him who taught it, that they thus acted; but from conscientious belief that such was the right course.

As to the *first* request, they saw no necessity at the time for indoctrinating the large Church under their pastoral oversight with abstruse evil of which it was in happy ignorance; and as to the *second*, they considered it right to put the Church at Ebrington-street under discipline, but discipline *short of excommunication*. They allowed that it had lost its character for wisdom and fidelity by continuing to own Mr. Newton as a teacher, and concluded no longer to accept as valid its recommendation of members to fellowship, but to receive only such of its members as should, on personal examination, appear to be sound in the faith. They established a spiritual quarantine.

To place a Church in this way under ban—to treat it as a suspicious and suspected place—is to put it under discipline. To refuse to receive any of its members is to excommunicate it, and they could not see any warrant for so solemn a step as this. They felt it would involve the cutting off of numbers of simple-minded believers, who, in happy ignorance of evil, were walking with God, and feeding on His word, and who might be unable to detect the error, and unlikely to imbibe it. They concluded, therefore, that the exercise of more vigilant oversight than usual as regards persons from Plymouth applying for fellowship, was all that they were called upon to adopt.

From their conclusion, Mr. J. N. Darby strongly dissented. His orthodoxy on the point of doctrine in question was not greater than theirs, nor his zeal against error; but his judgment as to *how* the Church at Ebrington-street, which was charged with tolerating error, *should be treated*, was the very opposite to theirs. He wished to cut it off, root and branch, and insisted that no one belonging to it, however sound and godly, ought to be received in any other assembly. How far a previous separation from it,

* See "A Statement from Christians assembling in Ebrington-street, Plymouth," January, 1848.

on altogether distinct grounds, in 1845, and how far years of still previous personal antagonism to its leaders, on prophetic and other subjects, may have influenced his judgment, it is not for us to say. *Such had been*; but let his motives be scrutinized by his God;—his conduct alone by his brethren. What that conduct was, must now be briefly stated. He issued a document in 1849, excommunicating (as far as his authority went) not Ebrington-street, Plymouth, alone, but Bethesda, Bristol, *also*.* That is, not only the Church which tolerated unsound individuals, but the Church which deemed it right to receive from the suspected Church, its *sound* members, should they apply for fellowship!

He accused Bethesda of “acting in the fullest and most decided way as the supporter of Mr. Newton and those associated with him, and in the way in which the enemy of souls most desires it should be done.” He accused them of receiving “active and unceasing agents of Mr. Newton’s, holding and justifying his views;” he accused them of “formally and deliberately admitting the heresy,” “under the plea of not investigating,” and he urged upon Christians everywhere that to receive any one from Bethesda, was to “open a door to the infection of the abominable evil,” and he published to the world his decision “neither to go there,” nor where “persons from it,” were admitted. Seventeen years have made no change in his opinion. To this day he calls this Church “*a terrible sink of evil*,”† “the wickedest place on earth,” &c., &c. He speaks and writes of their conduct as “*the evil* which Christians have especially to avoid in the present day,” as “*the worst kind of infidelity to Christ*,” as “*the coldest contempt for Christ* he ever came across.” He says he would “rather be burned than enter into it.” He speaks of those who differ from him on this point as “active supporters of indifference to Christ’s glory, and of covering and excusing the dishonour done to His name;” that

* It has been maintained by some who endorse Mr. Darby’s act that this was not excommunication, but simply “retiring” from fellowship. To such persons we would observe that in saying you simply retire from fellowship, you are making a partial statement. You are omitting the main feature of the case, for, in retiring from an assembly on the ground of defilement, you hold it as a principle that you carry the table of the Lord with you, and, that *that* which you have left, is no longer the Lord’s table. If it were, why retire from it? Why excommunicate yourself? You retire, taking the place of the Church of God, and in excluding your brethren in Christ from what you thus claim to be, you practically excommunicate them.

† Letter to Mr. Spurr, Sheffield.

such a course "is the spring and support of unprincipledness and evil," and that "all who are under its influence turn from uprightness and truth,"* &c., &c.

In a similar style, Mr. Darby's adherents speak of "the wicked and ungodly ways of Bethesda in reference to the heresy." They accuse that Church of "having identified itself with the false teacher, his party and his deeds"—of "fellowship with blasphemous doctrine about Christ,"† and so on. Now these are very awful accusations, but are they *true*? It becomes all who hear them, to pause before they *believe* them, according as it is written, "against an Elder receive not an accusation but before two or three witnesses," and "in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established."

Even human law requires that we hold a man innocent till he is *proved* to be guilty; and let it be remembered, assertion, however strong it may be, and however oft repeated, is not proof. If these assertions were *true*, "exclusive" discipline would be pardonable, if not altogether justifiable, for the Church is "the pillar and ground of the truth," and if she should be jealous in the maintenance of one truth above another, it is of the truth concerning the Lord Jesus. He humbled himself to the dust of death to raise her to a throne of glory. He is the centre and object of all God's counsels, His well beloved and only begotten Son. Had she a thousand lives she should be willing to spend and sacrifice them all, to maintain and defend His divine glory, and preserve intact the truth of His finished work!

Blessed be God, therefore, for any true zeal for the name and glory of Jesus, displayed in this chequered controversy. But zeal may run into extravagance; it is fire—a good servant if used to consume dross, but an awful tyrant if it attack the house or the city. Zeal is not always according to knowledge. It is sometimes "strange fire;" a fruit of the spirit, if pure and genuine, but more easily counterfeited by the flesh than many others.

We do not hesitate to affirm that these awful accusations are not true; and more, that nothing but the blinding influence of party spirit can account for the way in which they are urged year after year, although long ago they have been proved to be untrue.

The documents published at the time, are sources of evidence

* Letter to Mr. Spurr.

† "The Bethesda Fellowship in 1865."

now available for those who were not acquainted with the facts when they transpired. These documents distinctly prove—

I.—*That from the first the leaders at Bethesda condemned Mr. Newton's doctrine.* We quote their own words:—

"We utterly disclaim the assertion that the blessed Son of God was involved in the guilt of the first Adam, or that He was born under the curse of the broken law, because of His connection with Israel. We hold Him to have been always the holy one of God, in whom the Father was well pleased. We know of no curse which the Saviour bore, except that which he endured as the surety for sinners, according to that Scripture 'He was made a curse for us.' We utterly reject the thought of His ever having had the experiences of an unconverted person, and maintain that while He suffered outwardly the trials connected with His being a man and an Israelite, still in His feelings and experience as well as in His external character, he was entirely separate from sinners!"—"Letter of the Ten," 1848.

II.—That persons known as holding Mr. Newton's errors, were never received at Bethesda.

"In reply to the second reason (for secession) that persons may be received from Plymouth, holding evil doctrines, we are happy in being able to state that ever since the matter was agitated *we have maintained, that persons coming from thence, if suspected of any errors would be liable to be examined on the point*; that in the case of one individual, who had fallen under the suspicion of some brethren among us, not only was there private intercourse with him, relative to his views, as soon as it was known that he was objected to, but the individual referred to, known to some of us for several years as a consistent Christian, actually came to a meeting of labouring brethren, for the very purpose that any question might be asked him by any brother who should have any difficulty on his mind."—"Letter of the Ten." (This individual proved to be quite sound and was received.)

III.—That the Brethren at Bethesda so far separated from the Church at Plymouth, as to refuse to receive any to communion on its recommendation.

"The brethren at Bethesda adopted precautions such as they had adopted with no other gathering, namely, persons from Plymouth instead of being admitted on their application, or by letters of recommendation, should after having been seen and approved of by Elder brethren, be merely proposed to the Church, as though they had not been anywhere in communion before, and a week's interval allowed for any who had anxieties to visit them, and that then, if no objection should be entertained, they should be admitted. This has now been the practice for a year. Subsequently Miss T., of Plymouth, applied for communion; this case not having been satisfactory after examination, Miss T. withdrew," that is to say, was not received.—*The Bristol Case, by Lord Congleton.*

IV.—That afterwards the Elders of Bethesda, under altered circumstances, convened the Church to read and discuss Mr. Newton's tracts; and that at those meetings not only were the

views set forth in the tracts condemned, but the conclusion was arrived at, that "no one upholding, defending, or maintaining them should be received" at Bethesda.

"Seven Church meetings were subsequently held at Bethesda (1848). Mr. Newton's tracts were considered and investigated, and this was the conclusion arrived at—"*That no one defending, maintaining, or upholding Mr. Newton's views or tracts, should be received into communion.*" "This conclusion was given out two or three times at the last Church meeting by each of the brethren Groves, Müller, and Craik."—*The Bristol Case, by Lord Congleton.*

The result of this decision was the withdrawal from Bethesda of six persons who were friends of Mr. Newton, and on the next occasion when a member of the Church at Bethesda went to Mr. Newton's meeting at Plymouth, and *returned*, his act was condemned, and he withdrew, considering "the regulations at Bethesda" effectually hindered Christians from Mr. Newton's meeting, from even applying for fellowship there.

Let any unprejudiced and candid mind judge whether or not *these facts* justify the *accusations* made against the Church at Bethesda, of "having fellowship with blasphemous doctrines about Christ," "wicked and ungodly ways," &c., &c.!

"The Letter of the Ten" from which we have quoted is said to be "a slight upon Christ," and "a grievous sin against God." Bethesda is accused of taking "neutral ground" in a question affecting "the glory of Christ," and of advocating "latitudinarian principles." These charges rest on no better foundation than the last. The neutrality consists in dealing with the heresy in a different way from that called for by the accusers. That is all. The unsound doctrine was not overlooked, much less commended as truth; and as to latitudinarianism, it is only by taking certain clauses in a wider sense than that in which they were intended, that the charge seems to have any foundation. The Elders at Bethesda assert that this "Letter of the Ten" was never intended as a rule or standard; and that they own no standard but the word of God. Mr. Craik, one of their pastors, in 1857, nine years after it was written, says of it:—

"It was *never intended* as a Church rule." "For certain party purposes it was printed and circulated by those who were opposed to our Church action. It was not printed by any one connected with Bethesda. Those who published it, *represented* it as a statement of Church principles. Some time ago we were requested to withdraw the letter. We entirely objected to do so, inasmuch as that which had never been *enacted*, could not possibly be *repealed*." "We have as a body no code of laws but those

contained in the New Testament ; and we feel bound to receive all those who give satisfactory evidence of belonging to Christ, and who maintaining the essential verities of our holy faith, are at the same time walking consistently as Christians. We recognise no limited or sectarian bonds of fellowship, and desire to be considered in communion with all that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth. We have no sympathy with any system that would necessitate a sectarian position ; nor can we allow ourselves to belong to any other brotherhood except that which is common to the whole family of God."

In reply to some inquiries as to the same document, from one who thought it seemed to sanction latitudinarianism, he writes:—

"Bristol, November 25, 1849.

"MY DEAR BROTHER,

"In reply to your letter of inquiry, touching certain points contained in what has been called 'The Letter of the Ten,' I beg to remark that although we did not consider the fact of error having been taught at Plymouth or elsewhere, as a sufficient reason for our bringing the matter before the body here, yet I fully allow, that if we were satisfied that the well-being of the saints here *required* our investigating and judging any particular form of error, *it would be our duty to do so*. In reference to the objection against our paper, grounded on the statement that 'even supposing the author of the tracts were fundamentally heretical, this would not warrant us in rejecting those who came from under his teaching, until we were satisfied that they had understood and imbibed views essentially unsound,' I beg to remark that in all ordinary cases, and as a general rule of action, persons coming from a known heretical teacher would not be received amongst us, except on the understanding that they had renounced his errors, and relinquished the body amongst whom the false doctrine was taught and maintained. *During these seventeen years past this has been our mode of acting ; neither do I know of a single instance* in which persons previously connected with heretical bodies have applied to us for communion and been received amongst us, without by that very act thereby *relinquishing the connexion with their former associates*. This has been the general understanding amongst us for these seventeen years past. I am satisfied that the other brethren who labour among us accord with the explanation I have just given. Hoping that these explanations may be satisfactory, I remain, my dear Brother, yours affectionately in Christ,

"HENRY CRAIK."

And Mr. Müller, in reply to another inquirer, thus writes briefly but explicitly:—

"21, Paul-street, Kingsdown, Bristol,
"Sept. 18th, 1866.

"MY DEAR BROTHER,

"With regard to your letter respecting a paper commonly called 'The Letter of the Ten,' I send you this as my reply.

As a body or assembly, *we have no standard but the Word of God*—no code of laws, or regulations, or Church principles, but those contained therein. We desire in all things to be subject to the Word of God, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The paper to which you refer was never

intended to be more than a mere statement of facts and explanation of reasons for pursuing the course which the labouring brethren thought to be *right at that time, under the peculiar circumstances of the case*. It is to be regarded as *having passed away* with the occasion which gave rise to it. That paper was never intended for publication, and was read to the Church with explanations. It should not have been published without our consent, or without the explanations which accompanied the reading of it. I am, my dear Brother, yours affectionately in the Lord,

GEORGE MÜLLER."

Now, we ask the reader, what are your genuine impressions about this case? Are the accusations against Bethesda made in such strong terms by the "Exclusive Brethren," justifiable or not? And if unjustifiable, how can we account for their being repeated thus, year after year, when their untruthfulness has been so often shown? Must it not arise either from *party spirit* or from *delusion*, or from a combination of the two? And is it not so, that party spirit indulged, *leads to delusion*? Does not a disinclination to believe the truth, often lead to the *belief of a lie*? *Blindness* is no uncommon chastisement for those who *will not see*. Common sense must see and candour admit that something more than pure zeal for the glory of God, lies at the bottom of all this. What is this "Bethesda," thus stigmatized with epithets of opprobrium, and held up as an embodiment of evil before those necessarily ignorant of its past history and present state?—a large and flourishing Church, composed of some 900 believers—just what a Church might be expected to be, which for long years had been cared for and ministered to by such men as George Müller and Henry Craik—men whose names are known and dear to Christian hearts the world over, and will continue to be so as long as the Church honours those whom God delights to honour. Led by such shepherds into the green pastures of the word, and beside its still waters, this Church has been largely added to from year to year, and mercifully preserved from all heresy and schism. As far as is known to those who now labour among the saints there, not one in that large assembly holds or sympathizes with any false doctrine; and if there be a fault as to discipline, it is, in the judgment of many, on the side of *severity*, rather than on the side of *laxity*, that this Church errs. And be it remembered that Bethesda was originally, and indeed at the time when all this trouble began, what might be called an independent congregation; that is, independent of other Churches; and has continued so to the present day. It

never was one of the "Brethren's Gatherings," as they were commonly termed. It has a peculiar constitution of its own, with its pastors and office-bearers, different from what prevails amongst the "Brethren." But such was their simplicity of faith and godliness of walk, that many of the "Brethren" were drawn in to mingle in their worship, and to join in their fellowship. This fact (often alleged as an accusation against them) should have moderated the tone in which the "Brethren" called upon them to act. *They* judged it wiser to keep evil doctrines from the assembly at large, and to deal with them privately. What right had the "Brethren" to prescribe the course of discipline to be pursued? What right had they to demand, on pain of excommunication, that the Elders at Bethesda should, contrary to their own judgment, call an assembly of all the worshippers, that they might examine, and sift, and judge for themselves? Was not this demand calculated to drive them into the very opposite course? It *may* be that the course they pursued was not in all its details the wisest that might have been adopted. Granted. Granting they were slow to move in the matter, was this not accounted for by the fact that they were too godly and too conscientious to lend their sanction to the way in which the controversy had been managed up to that point? They saw much of the flesh,—much of the wrath of man which "worketh not the righteousness of God," in connection with it. It was a turbid muddy current, and they were surely pardonable for not wishing, ere they were *quite sure duty required it*, to be carried into it. They saw dishonour done to Christ by both sides, and they wished to be identified with neither. But supposing they were wrong—too slow, too forbearing, too lenient; are they therefore to be charged with "the coldest contempt for Christ," "the worst kind of infidelity to Christ," and so on? Do the facts justify such language? Was the evil doctrine ever *taught* at Bethesda? No such charge is even made! Was it ever knowingly and intentionally harboured there with a view to screen it? No! Was it carelessly admitted and suffered to root and spread? No! It was never intentionally tolerated, and it was eventually judged and rejected. What, then, is their guilt? That they did not, in the judgment of their accusers, *act with sufficient promptness and decision in cutting off* some who were personal friends of Mr. Newton, and who did not regard him as a heretic; denying (however mistakenly) that his tracts would bear the construction

put on them, or his statements warrant the deductions drawn from them. Perhaps there was ground for complaint, and even for earnest loving expostulations on this point; but it was a delicate, difficult case of discipline, and we must give them credit for having acted prayerfully, conscientiously, and according to the best of their judgment; and be it remembered, *the course they adopted was owned and blessed by the Lord to the attainment of the object in view*, for all who held or sympathized with erroneous views either withdrew or were reclaimed. So, it is obvious the real question is,—was there too much tenderness or forbearance in their mode of acting, or ought a more summary mode to have been adopted? Here there is difference of opinion. Some think the discipline of the House of God was faithfully, scripturally, and wisely carried out; others are of opinion that it was not, and that a more summary course of discipline should have been pursued.

In weighing this question, the *object* of discipline should be kept in view. It should not be, to cut off, but to restore. It should not be vindictive, but curative. The Church should desire to reclaim her erring members, not to drive them away; and should act patiently, tenderly, lovingly, towards them, seeking their restoration in the spirit of meekness. Is it not possible to exercise faithfulness to Christ, and grace to the delinquent at the same time? May we not learn a lesson of forbearance in discipline from God's dealings with Israel? Oh! the tenderness of His loving heart, the forbearance of His omnipotent arm! How tardy to execute the judgment threatened and deserved! The spirit of the gospel too so slow to strike, so ready to forgive, is point blank against the military style of discipline, which was called for—condemnation, and immediate execution!

And let us look too at the whole history of the Apostles' dealing with the Churches. Oh! how meek, how loving, how forbearing, how expectant of good! how gentle, how parental! no matter whether the evil is doctrinal or moral, the righteous firmness of the judge is blended with the gentle judicious treatment of the nurse, ministered, may we not say, with more than parental love! Do not the "Exclusive Brethren" overlook this ingredient in discipline? And if this was the spirit which animated the beloved pastors at Bethesda, in their conduct towards their erring brethren, shall we censure them for it? Even if they were too lenient from less commendable motives, surely we should rejoice that in spite of their

weakness, God has kept the Church under their care from the evil doctrine, and deigned to preserve it in purity and peace, and to crown its beloved pastors with marked tokens of His approval. And will not the "Exclusive Brethren"—brethren in Christ, as we regard them—rejoice in this, and give thanks to God for His grace?

And here, before tracing the further developments of this strange delusion, we would strongly urge conscientious young believers not to be frightened into a painful and unscriptural course of action, by the strong but groundless accusations against Bethesda, which we have described. Let them ask proof, and be very sure it is proof, ere they accept it! Let them make allowance for the effects of party spirit and prejudice. It is no uncommon thing for Christian men to be betrayed into intemperate zeal; and gifted men, though believers, are not delivered from the working of the flesh, or exempt from the temptation to become party leaders. Let them above all "*try the spirits*" of those who would lead them to violate the laws of Christ for the sake of upholding His glory! Many a one is unable to detect a fallacy, or expose a subtle error, who is yet very competent to discern between meekness and pride, assumption and humility, patient grace and impatience of opposition. Now as ever, "by their fruits ye shall know them," and "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace," &c.

Such treatment of a Church of Christ as has been described seems bad enough, but it was not all. Mr. Darby was not content with cutting off the Church at Plymouth, and the Church at Bethesda. He proceeded further, and led the brethren to excommunicate all the Churches everywhere who did not follow his example, *i.e., all the Churches who would receive any one who worshipped at Bethesda, and all the Churches who would receive a worshipper from them again, and so on ad infinitum.* At this distance of time it seems scarcely credible that Christians could have been induced to adopt such a course! But such was the influence of this gifted man, that he actually drew large numbers even into this path of unscriptural intolerance! For fifteen years since the publication of the circular which promulgated this principle, and indeed up to the present moment, the fierce fires of controversy have raged amongst the once happy and

united "Brethren." Mr. Darby, who itinerates extensively as a minister, has ignited them far and wide, fanned them wherever they seemed to be waning, and kindled them afresh, where they have died out. Not only at home, but on the Continent—in India, in New Zealand, in Canada and the States—have peaceable assemblies of believers been torn asunder, and plunged into seas of strife by his agency, direct or indirect.

To cut off the members of Christ from communion at His table by His own clear direction, how solemn, how mournful! To do it without *distinct commands* from Him, how dangerous, how awful! but to do it *against His will*, how presumptuous and daring a wickedness!—nothing less than the rejection of His authority. To this day Mr. Darby and his adherents prescribe and practise *the wholesale excommunication of sound and godly Churches*, for declining to excommunicate without scriptural warrant the godly and orthodox members of a Church whose crime (to say the *worst* of it) was temporary laxity in a single point of discipline eighteen years ago! This course has naturally divided "the Brethren" into two sections—on the one hand are those who indiscriminately cut off all who differ from them on this point of discipline; on the other, those who refuse to do so, because they find no warrant for it in the Word of God. Alas! for all the perplexity and misery, the strife and sin to which this unhallowed controversy has given rise. How have bosom friends been alienated! How have the fountains of brotherly love been dried up! How have the energies of earnest Christians been diverted from the Lord's work and turned against those with whom they *had* been happily engaged in His service! and how have many retired from the field, separated from fellowship with others, by this destructive and paralyzing spirit of exclusiveness, to while away their time in dreamy idleness! How has the once peaceful scene of brotherly affection become a dark battle-field of strife and bitterness! What a triumph of the wicked one! what an occasion to all enemies of the Lord to blaspheme! Would that one might draw the veil, and hide the scene from every eye! But love to the sheep, and fidelity to the great Shepherd, impose this painful necessity of exposing once more the evil of this course, lest others should be unwarily betrayed into its hopeless labyrinth!

To sum up then. If the dreadful charges made against this

Church at Bristol could be substantiated, the "Exclusive" course would not be so bad. *If*, in the language which has been used, "*Bethesda has settled down on its own base, and that base is latitudinarian indifference to the dishonour of Christ,*" there can be no question as to the light in which it should be regarded; but if no such guilt lies at its door, if there be not a Church in the land more faithful in the maintenance of scriptural discipline, then it is quite another matter. We fearlessly assert, the Church at Bethesda was never guilty of "the coldest contempt for Christ," or even of "sanctioning and supporting Mr. Newton's doctrine," or of doing anything in the whole controversy that exposes her to righteous excommunication.

The *onus probandi* rests on the accuser. He who makes such awful charges against a Church of Christ is bound to *prove* them. If the only proof which can be produced be, that *for a time, a few persons* who did not themselves *hold* evil doctrine (though blind to the fact that another had taught it) were retained in fellowship, we conclude, the charge is *not true*; and he who makes it *in such terms as Mr. Darby has done is, therefore, a "railer."* To make this point clear, we place (even at the risk of repetition) the false accusations and the facts, side by side, before the reader's eye:—

Writing in *August, 1848*, Mr. Darby said:—"Bethesda is acting in the fullest and most decided way as the supporter of Mr. Newton and the evil associated with him," "helping" him and his friends "to get a footing as Christians for those who hold it, so as to be able to spread it, and put sincere souls off their guard."—*Lithographed Circular, signed J. N. D.*

"The most active agents of Mr. Newton are assiduously occupied amongst the members of Bethesda, in denying that Mr. Newton holds errors, and explaining and palliating his doctrines, and removing any apprehension of them from the minds of the saints."—*Id.*

"Mr. Müller stated to the saints that Mr. Newton had retracted

In *June, 1848*, the Bethesda Brethren had publicly declared as follows:—"We *utterly disclaim*" the doctrines taught by Mr. Newton; "*we utterly reject*" his peculiar thoughts; our views on the point in question are "*unohanged.*" "Ever since the matter was agitated, we have maintained" that persons from Plymouth, if suspected, should be "*examined on the point.*"—*Letter of the Ten.*

Some personal friends of Mr. Newton, who were blind to his errors, but *did not hold them*, were in fellowship at this time. No one known as holding Mr. Newton's peculiar errors has ever been received at Bethesda.—*Bristol Case, by Lord Congleton.*

In November, 1847, Mr. Newton issued a printed acknowledgment of

publicly before God and the world, with the fullest confession, the error he had held, which every one acquainted with the facts *knows to be as contrary to those facts as any statement can possibly be,*" "acting with utmost prejudice, and misleading the saints by it."—*Id.*

Now, to state publicly, with a knowledge of the facts, what is "as contrary to facts as possible," is to *lie*; and to lie to saints about the things of God, with a view to mislead them, is exceeding wickedness. *Of this wickedness Mr. Darby publicly accuses God's honoured servant, George Müller.* With what justice let the reader judge!

his error. In it he says:—"Recent circumstances having necessitated a careful review of the whole subject, I have been led to see that *I was distinctly in error* in holding that the Lord Jesus came by birth under any imputation of guilt, or the consequences of such imputation.

"I see that results altogether contrary to Christian doctrine are involved in, and may be fairly deduced, from this *error*, which I now desire *explicitly to renounce*; and I desire to acknowledge *my error* in having thus taught and held on this subject; and I hereby withdraw all statements of mine, whether in print or in any other form, in which *this error*, or any of its fruits, may be found." "I desire to *acknowledge it fully*, and to *acknowledge it as sin*. It is my desire thus to *confess it before God and His Church*, and I desire that this may be considered as an *expression of my deep and unfeigned grief and sorrow*, especially by those who may have been grieved or injured by *the false statement*, or by any consequences thence resulting. I trust the Lord will not only pardon, but will graciously counteract any evil effects which may have arisen to any therefrom."—*B. W. Newton.*

"A paper was read" (the Letter of the Ten) "in which they diligently *extenuate and palliate* Mr. Newton's doctrine."—*Id.*

The following are the only sentences in the "Letter of the Ten" on which *this* charge can be founded:—"Christian brethren, hitherto of unblemished reputation for soundness in the faith, have come to different conclusions as to the actual *amount of error* contained in them." The tracts "are written in an ambiguous style," and "many would not be able to understand what they contain, because of the mode of expression employed."

"Members of Ebrington-street, active and unceasing agents of Mr. Newton, holding and justifying his views, are received at Bethesda."—*Id.*

Persons known as holding Mr. Newton's errors have never been received or retained at Bethesda.—*Bristol Case, by Lord Congleton.*

"The abominable evil has been formally and deliberately admitted at Bethesda."—*Id.*

In February, 1849, Mr. G. V. W. writes :—"The aim of Bethesda is still to make a party, positively apart from us all, (and apart, I judge, too, from Mr. Newton)."

"Unless our brethren can prove either that error is held and taught among us, or that individuals are received into communion who ought not to be admitted, they can have no Scriptural warrant for withdrawing from our fellowship."—*Letter of the Ten.*

In June, 1849, the Bethesda Brethren wrote:—"We judged that this controversy had been so carried on as to cause the truth to be evil spoken of, and we do not desire to be considered as identifying ourselves with that which has caused the opposer to reproach the way of the Lord. At the same time we wish distinctly to be understood *that we would seek to maintain fellowship with all believers, and consider ourselves as particularly associated with those who meet, as we do, simply in the name of the Lord Jesus.*"—*Letter of the Ten.*

CHAPTER III.

EXCLUSIVE ARGUMENTS CONSIDERED.

THE Church is "the pillar and ground of the truth." It should display it and maintain it. It should hold up a clear and unambiguous standard of doctrine, setting forth the great verities of the Christian faith, and seek to maintain purity and separatedness of walk in the midst of an ungodly world. If it fail in either of these respects, it fails in faithfulness to Christ, and has lost its character as a Church of God. But whilst the standard of truth and holiness is to be held with a firm and unyielding hand—whilst there is to be no connivance at moral evil of any kind—no latitudinarianism as to doctrine to be allowed, we must remember that the Church of God is not only for the "perfect" and the "spiritual," for the strong and the healthy, but also for the "weak" and the "ignorant," the "sickly" and the "diseased." And instead of cutting off such, and casting them out of the

Church, these are the very persons who stand in need of the Church's aid—the very persons whom those who have the sympathies of the heart of Christ, will seek to enlighten, to strengthen, and to restore.

This leads us to the subject of *discipline*—a subject on which the apostolic epistles throw much light, and on which, it appears to us, the “Exclusive Brethren” have made grave and fatal mistakes.

Let us first state their principles, looking at them in the abstract, and losing sight of the special circumstances which first developed their system, and then examine the main arguments by which they are sought to be supported.

To state it, then, in brief, the “Exclusive” doctrine is this—that in order to the maintenance of her purity and holiness *the Church is responsible to excommunicate all those who, though sound in the faith, and in other respects consistent in conduct, are deficient in the exercise of discipline in such a case as that which has been before us ; and further, to excommunicate all Churches who refuse to excommunicate them, and all Churches which knowingly receive communicants from these again, and so on ad infinitum.* Now, we ask you, dear Christian reader, have you in the course of your studies of Scripture, ever met with such a law of discipline as this ?

Holy Scripture contains laws of discipline uttered in the clearest language, and it contains instances of their application, but no such law as the above, (for that would be a command to the Church to commit moral suicide) and no example of such conduct, save one, which is held up to everlasting reprobation by the beloved disciple. “Diotrophes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words ; and not content therewith, neither doth himself receive the brethren, and *forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the Church. Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good.* He that doeth good is of God ; but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.” (3 John.)

It will be asked, What are the grounds on which it is sought to base this exclusive principle ?

I.—It is attempted to deduce it, first, from the doctrine of the *unity of the body of Christ*. A strange deduction, truly, from such a doctrine ! The oneness of the body made a plea for dividing it ! Is not this a delusion of the enemy in the garb of an angel of light ! Let us strip off his false attire, and show his real form,

"The Church of Christ is one," say the "Exclusives;" "the action, therefore, of any part of it, met in the name of Jesus, should be endorsed by the whole Church. Each such part acts according to the mind, and with the authority of Christ Himself. To dissent from the action of such a part is to rebel against the Lord; and to associate with those whom such a party excommunicates, is to take sides against Christ, and virtually to excommunicate yourself."

1. Now we fully agree with the doctrine, that all the true members of Christ form "*one body*." "There is one body and one Spirit." Let us seek to maintain that unity, and to preserve it practically by every means in our power. "With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." May the Lord of love and peace mightily incline our hearts to this.

2. With the doctrine that the Church *ought to be harmonious* in her action, we fully agree. There should be "no divisions" among us, but we should be "perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment." (1 Cor. i. 10.)

3. With the doctrine that wherever "two or three" true Christians are gathered together in the name of Jesus, He is in the midst of them, and that when they sincerely and prayerfully act in accordance with Scripture and under the guidance of the Spirit in a matter of discipline, other Churches should endorse their action, we also fully agree. The Body is one, and Christ is its Head; and the decisions to which He leads one portion, are those to which He would lead the whole.

4. So far we are quite agreed; but now comes a most important inquiry, as to the *application* of these principles. Ought we to take it for granted that, because a certain number of professing Christians, *say* they have met in the name of Jesus, and obtained His guidance in a question of discipline, *that therefore they have?* Is their *saying* that they have obtained His guidance and acted with His authority, *proof* that they have done so? Are we sure that they were well informed on the point? Are we certain they were unprejudiced? Are we certain they were fully enlightened as to the teachings of the Word, and as to the application of those teachings to the case in hand? Are we certain that they acted in communion with the Lord? Are we *quite* certain that they are Christians at all? *If we are certain of all these things, then,*

indeed, we do well to follow their decision implicitly, for they must have been correct; *but if we are not certain of these things*—if we have reason to think they may have been misinformed as to the case, or mistaken as to Scripture, or that they *may*, at the time, have been prejudiced in feeling, or unspiritual in mind, then we are surely *at liberty to examine* the reasons which led to their decision, and to endorse or dissent from their conclusion, according as it shall prove to be Scriptural or otherwise. While, therefore, *as a rule*, we might unquestioningly receive the decisions of Churches, which we hold to be spiritually wise and conscientious, we might, as an exception, reconsider their verdicts, under peculiar circumstances. And there might be other Churches of which we entertained so poor an opinion, that we should feel bound, *as a rule*, to examine into their grounds of action, reserving to ourselves the right to endorse or reject their decisions, according to their wisdom or folly, justice or injustice. For we are *bound* to “prove all things,” and “hold fast” only “that which is good,” for “*whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*”

Those who deny this, must maintain either that a “gathering” of Christians *cannot err*, which is worse than Popery; or that the Church universal is bound, without inquiry, to *endorse and perpetuate all the folly and wickedness which each assembly professing to meet in the name of Jesus, may commit.* The mere statement of such a doctrine is its refutation. Any thoughtful mind will see that, while the doctrine of the Church’s unity imposes upon it the duty to act *harmoniously in right*, it can *never force it to act harmoniously in wrong*; and further, that while this doctrine condemns dissent from the right and good, it does not condemn dissent from the wrong and evil; and further, *it does not show us how we ought to treat dissenters from the right and good*—for *this* we must look elsewhere in Scripture—much less does it render incumbent, or in the least sanction such a system of wholesale excommunication as the “Exclusive Brethren” have founded upon it! The principle of blind adhesion to the decisions of every “gathering” met professedly in the name of Jesus is absurd and impracticable. No one who understands much of the narrowness of mind, and perversity of heart existing in the best of men, could doubt the possibility of *two such assemblies differing in judgment* in a case of discipline. The history of the Church for 1800 years, and of the Brethren in particular, affords innumerable such instances.

Now, the existence of such instances of diversity of judgment proves three things :—

1. The *fallibility* of such assemblies.
2. The *impossibility* of acting in harmony with them *all*.
3. The *necessity* of trying cases about which they *differ*, upon *their own merits*, and forming an independent judgment, after hearing both sides of the question, for “he that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is a folly and a shame unto him.”

Without for a moment denying that an assembly of believers met in the name Jesus, is competent, yea, responsible, to exercise discipline according to the rules laid down in Scripture, we strenuously deny that any such assembly can so lay claim to infallibility as that its decision *as such* should be unconditionally *binding* on other assemblies. They are binding, *if in accordance with Scripture*, not otherwise. To deny this is Popery. It is to put the Church above the Scriptures. Grant for instance that the decision of the Church at Corinth, to “put away from among themselves that wicked person” was binding on all other Churches, was their previous erroneous decision in *retaining him in fellowship* equally so? Clearly not! and *if not the exclusive assumption must be surrendered*.

The position of the “Exclusive Brethren,” therefore, that their decision in this Bethesda question is *binding upon the whole Church*, is hollow and untenable, if not utterly fanatical, for it *assumes* that which has yet to be *proved*, viz., that they acted under the guidance of the Lord and in accordance with His word ; and then, *on the ground of this bold assumption*, it demands the subjection of the entire Church to an unrighteous decision, unwarranted by Scripture, and contrary to all the dictates of sound reason and enlightened conscience.

It is a relief to turn from this unscriptural and dangerous doctrine to the following statement of the views of the Nonconformists, expressed in the language of a leading exponent of their opinions :—

“Churches confiding in the wisdom of one another, and maintaining a careful watch over their reciprocal interests, do not generally receive the ejected, because there is a strong presumption that he is guilty; but they *may* re-investigate the case as far as they are able, and admit to their fellowship the person so expelled. Thus the sentence of one Church controls the whole community no further than the community reposes confidence in

the intelligence, purity, and wisdom of a particular society. . . . *We allow that believers may be occasionally mistaken in interpreting the mind of Christ, or in referring a particular thing to the general principle under which it falls; but this is only tantamount to the affirmation, that men are fallible, even in their best state.*"

Ah! that is Independency! We hold the unity of the body, say the "Exclusive Brethren!" and what is this unity of the body said to be denied by the exercise of local responsibility in cases of discipline? The "Exclusive Brethren" have some notions about it evidently foreign to Scripture! We find *there* the unity of the body of Christ which consists in the indwelling of "*One Spirit*" in the Head, and in each member, binding each to all, and all to Him. Diversity in discipline, certainly, does not destroy *this* unity; and absolute unanimity of judgment, and uniformity of action, are not essential to its existence. This is clear from the precept, "with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love, *endeavouring to keep* the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." This injunction, surely, assumes the probable existence of differences of opinion and action, and is framed to meet them. Such differences are not *right*, in the abstract, but they are incidental to a state of imperfection, and the Spirit of God deals with such a condition of things in many passages besides this. It is not the existence of such diversities as these, but the determination not to tolerate them, that hinders the manifestation of the unity of the Spirit. It is the insisting on *uniformity*, which is the great hindrance to the manifestation of *unity*. That unity exists, however, even when its manifestation is hindered. It still binds together all the true members of Christ into one living body, in spite of their differences of judgment, and even in spite of their mutual intolerance, if such exist. But this "unity of the Spirit" does not bind together into one visible outward corporation, certain assemblies of believers, who think and act alike, *excluding certain others who think and act differently*. Any bond that does this is a sectarian bond, for, without Scripture warrant, it shuts out many of those whom "the unity of the Spirit" takes in. Let the reader ponder this truth.

The unity of the Spirit binds together not bodies, but individuals. It binds them, not into outward uniformity, but into living oneness. It binds together, not some but all true believers. It binds the "Exclusive Brethren" to the thousands of

believers whom they cut off, as much as to those whom they receive. It is a bond which we can neither make nor break. We may or may not observe it and maintain it "*in the bond of peace.*" Its formation and continuance are not optional, but essential and involuntary. No Church action introduces a person into it, or shuts a person out of it. It is unlike membership in an outward visible body. It is a divine reality, for the indwelling of the One Spirit of the living God is its source and power.

This *unity of the body of Christ*, we submit, is not adequately acknowledged by most Christians, but by the "Exclusive Brethren" it is practically and systematically denied. Many require uniformity of action in important respects, but none that we know of demand such *uniformity of discipline* as the "Exclusive Brethren:" they are driven to disregard the former in seeking to secure the latter.*

II. Another Scripture by which it is attempted to justify the "exclusive" position is the passage in 2nd John:—"Many deceivers are entered into the world who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh; *this is a deceiver and an antichrist . . .* Whosoever abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. . . . If there come any unto you, and *bring not this doctrine*, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. For he that biddeth him God-speed, is partaker of his evil deeds."

It is evident the application of this passage must have *some limit*. It cannot mean, in the first place, that sinners of every shade and character should be treated as sinners of the deepest dye—as this guilty infidel; nor can it mean, in the second, that you are a partaker of all the evil deeds of which you are aware in those whom you receive to your house, or with whom you have fellowship at the Lord's table.

For, first, *if sinners of every shade are to be treated as this infidel*, all social intercourse is at an end; and, secondly, if *you are contaminated by domestic association, or church fellowship, with all the evil deeds of which you are cognisant in your associates*, however you may labour to correct them, then the house and the church must needs be places of unutterable and incessant defilement, and the sooner both are swept away the better! This brings us to hermit-life—"atoms at last!" The passage *cannot inculcate this*.

What then does it enjoin? It prescribes to believers a certain course of conduct towards a certain class of sinners, and assigns

* See Appendix B.

a reason for the precept, which reason announces a general principle.

1. Of whom does it speak? It speaks of an avowed Infidel, of one who publicly denies "that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh;" of one who "brings not the doctrine of Christ," and "hath not God." It speaks, therefore, not of an *erring brother*, nor indeed of a *private* individual, sound or unsound; but of an *antichristian teacher*, an active propagator of infidelity.* It has nothing whatsoever to say to persons *coming from a certain place*, but to persons *bringing a certain doctrine*. It is important this should be clearly seen, because it proves that *this* passage cannot justify "Exclusive" discipline. To do so it should run thus—"If a private Christian, personally sound and consistent, come unto you, *from a place* where heresy was wrongly dealt with, you may receive him to your own house, and salute him in love, but receive him not to the Lord's table." But the precept "receive him not" is not applied here to an *erring private brother*. The sin for which he is to be rejected, is not the sin of *evil association*—that is, it is not on the ground of his coming from any particular place; and the rejection which is enjoined, is not from *the Lord's table*, but from *your own*. The passage simply forbids the encouragement of an infidel *teacher*, who *brings antichristian doctrine*, by helping him on his way and wishing him success.

If this be the case, is it not a gross perversion of Scripture, to apply this injunction to brethren of faultless moral character, to sound orthodox Christians, to tried and eminent ministers of long standing, and to whole assemblies of conscientious saints? We desire implicitly to obey this Scripture, but if it be used to force us into a course contrary to other Scriptures, and indeed contrary to all Scripture, and to reason itself, we must say, "Add not thou to His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." "Ye shall not add to the word which I command you."

And how does this passage command us to treat an *anti-Christian teacher*?

*The expression in the original "points out the person as a teacher, not a mere traveller seeking hospitality:" "he not only comes without this doctrine, but by doing so he brings the contrary doctrine," "these were not to be received with the hospitality with which all *Christian* teachers and brethren were to be entertained." "The exercise of the love of the brethren is conditioned and limited by the truth; and is not to be extended to those who are enemies and impugnors of the truth." Alford, *in loc.*

2.—It commands total separation from him, in feeling and in fact. The elect lady is enjoined not to receive *to her house*, or even countenance by friendly salutation, an open and public enemy of Christ. To us the direction may seem almost superfluous, for who would introduce a teacher of infidelity into the bosom of his family? But in those early days, when bitter hostility to the name of Christ, and complete denial of His person and work, were more common than false profession of His name, instruction on the point was very requisite.

The early Christians were, no doubt, much more exposed than we are to the temptation of exchanging friendly greetings, and holding social intercourse with such heretical teachers. Everything of the sort is strictly forbidden here; such conduct could spring only from the absence of due faithfulness to Christ; and its tendency would be to unsettle those who so acted as to the most important Christian truths. The "Exclusive Brethren" argue from this passage that we are bound to reject not only *erring brethren*, but *whole congregations of sound and godly Christian people from the Lord's table!* Was Scripture ever more thoroughly abused?

And how is this extraordinary conclusion supported? Mainly by a misapplication of the principle which follows in v. 11.

3.—"For he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of" (or has fellowship with) "his evil deeds." That is,—"*Do not show him the least countenance. Do not even bid him good-speed, or wish him success; for, if you do, you sanction his course and promote the propagation of his evil doctrines; and you so far share his guilt; you have fellowship with his deeds as well as with himself; and this would be utterly contrary to the wisdom and holiness which become you.*" Such seems the simple meaning of the passage. That the principle is important, none can question; and its bearing on the previous prohibition is obvious.

Had this lady received and hospitably entertained the anti-Christian teacher, and brought him forward on his journey with good wishes for his success, she would have encouraged him in his sin, and would thus have rendered herself fairly chargeable with sharing his guilt.

We fully admit that this passage proves that Christians *may* commit sin by association with sinners; but it does not prove

that all association with sinners is sinful. *Is every association with sinners sinful?* Consider the frightful consequences of such a notion! It would involve a condemnation of the ways of the blessed Lord Himself, for He ate and drank with publicans and sinners, and partook of the same dish as the son of perdition! There is, therefore, an association with sinners, *not involving sympathy with their sin*, which is lawful and expedient; and this at once limits the application of the passage, "he that receiveth him into his house is partaker of his evil deeds," for to push it beyond its proper limits leads to false and blasphemous results.

This is clear; but it is equally clear that *sympathy with sinners in their sin is always sinful*. "He that biddeth him God-speed, is partaker of his evil deeds." The *reception of a sinner in certain cases* proves and expresses sympathy; but *does it do so in every case?* The fallacy of the "Exclusive" system lies in the assumption that it does. Scripture proves that it does not; our Lord received sinners, but He never sympathized with their sin; and so it may be with us. We may receive sinners, and show them kindness, whilst, so far from manifesting sympathy with their sin, our treatment of them may be accompanied with strongly expressed disapproval of it. Our intercourse in such a case does not involve participation in guilt. *Sympathy with sin*, not mere association with sinners, is what involves guilt.

There are, consequently, certain cases of association where no *sympathy with sin* exists, and to which this passage has not the remotest application. Those which we have been considering are, we maintain, of this character. Bethesda's course did not express or involve any sympathy with Mr. Newton or his doctrines; nor does the course of those who receive from Bethesda express or involve sympathy even with that Church, in its course in this matter. Bethesda, as we have seen, utterly repudiated these doctrines, never received any one avowing them, and put the Church which *did*, under spiritual quarantine. *It is, therefore, unjust to accuse her of fellowship with heretical doctrines or persons.*

And further, many Churches receive from Bethesda, who consider that there was a want of due promptness and decision in the case. Their doing so cannot prove sympathy with the course pursued, for they receive under protest against it. They are, therefore, as innocent of sympathy with her laxity, if such existed, as she is of sympathy with evil doctrine.

We would, then, entreat the "Exclusive brethren" to re-examine a passage which they have much relied on and much perverted. To an intelligent and unprejudiced mind such a misapplication of Scripture, demonstrates the weakness of their cause.

This law is good, if a man use it lawfully; but let no man make himself a transgressor by using it to condemn the guiltless. We advocate no sympathy with sin; we would not justify the wicked, but *we dare not condemn the righteous*. See Deut. xxv. 1, Ex. xxiii. 1, Prov. xvii. 15.

III.—The passage in 1 Cor. v. 6—" *A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*," is another on which the "Exclusive Brethren" rely as a warrant for cutting off in a summary manner whole assemblies of true Christians.

Let us glance at the state of things in the Corinthian Church, and see whether the way in which the Apostle dealt with it furnishes any warrant for such a course.

The Church at Corinth was in a low condition. Evil of varied character abounded. The grossest wickedness was allowed amongst them, unrebuked and uncondemned. They were impregnated with evil, both doctrinal and practical, and instead of being humbled, they were "puffed up."

Now, in such a condition of things, how did the inspired Apostle act? Did he excommunicate the whole Church on account of its *leavened* condition, after the "Exclusive" fashion on account of *supposed* evil? Did he write a general Epistle to all the Churches in Macedonia and Achaia, and elsewhere, saying, "I feel bound to present to you the case of [Corinth]. It involves to my mind the whole question of association with brethren, for this very simple reason that . . . their gathering is a trap laid to ensnare the sheep. It is at this moment acting in the fullest and most decided way as the supporter of [evil] and in the way in which the enemy of souls most desires it should be done . . . For my own part I should neither go to [Corinth] in its present state, nor while in that state, go where persons from it are knowingly admitted."—(*See J. N. D.'s Circular.*)

Was this the course pursued by the Apostle? Were we to look out for a case which would warrant it, it surely would be that of Corinth. But how differently does the Apostle act? He meets the evil with a firm and faithful hand, whilst he yearns over those who had fallen into it, with a longing, loving heart. If sin such

as this is, had been allowed to run its course unchecked, it would have been encouraged, and the name of the Lord Jesus dishonoured. He charges them, therefore, to purge out the leaven from their midst, but he knew too well the mind of the blessed Lord to cast them off without faithful, patient expostulation. He had more love, more faith, more spiritual power. He loved the saints. He trusted in God and the power of His grace, to overcome evil, and he used the appointed means, knowing that God would bless them, as He did bless them. He writes a letter *to themselves*—not *to others about them*—a letter full of love, though full also of instruction and rebuke. He thanks his God for the grace given to them, and acknowledges the abundance of their spiritual gifts. More; he praises them that they were keeping the ordinances as he had delivered them; one of which was the commemoration of the Lord's death. What! does he praise them for sitting at the Lord's table, notwithstanding the evil condition of things, although those who had fallen into much evil and into unsound doctrine may have been present? *He actually does!* Not that he would for a moment countenance the evil, or encourage the unsound doctrine. Far from it. But as long as he could cherish a hope of restoration, he would not entertain the thought of exercising the utmost act of severity—excommunication. "I praise you, brethren," he writes, "that ye remember me in all things, and *keep the ordinances*, as I delivered them to you."—(1 Cor. xi. 23).

What are we to learn from this divinely recorded precedent? Surely the contrast between the discipline of the "Exclusives" and that of the Apostle must strike every mind! If *this* mode of action were well pleasing to God, then, *that cannot be!* How much more, then, one may add, must that summary discipline be displeasing to God, which cuts off, without a word of expostulation or remonstrance, not only one Church suspected of complicity with evil, but hundreds and thousands of Christians against whom there is no charge whatsoever of evil, either as to doctrine or practice.

The figure of *leaven* is applied also, in Gal. v. 9, to *false doctrine*, "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion (that the keeping of the law and ordinances were the road to justification) cometh not of Him that calleth you; a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Fundamental heresy, "another gospel"—doctrine that frustrated

the grace of God and made Christ of none effect, was being preached at Galatia by some heretic, of whom Paul says, "let him be accursed." There could be no question *such* evil would soon spread. Indeed the Church was already "bewitched," so that Paul stood in doubt of them, and says they were "removed from Him that called them into the grace of Christ unto another gospel?" Was such the state of things at Bethesda? The question is too absurd to be asked, save to show its absurdity! We have already stated the facts, and need not rehearse them.

We hold therefore that this passage—"a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," so far from being fairly adduced as evidence against Bethesda, *is one of the strongest evidences in her favour*, for, had the leaven been there—had the evil been encouraged and in actual operation, as has been asserted, ere this the whole lump would have been leavened. Bethesda, on the contrary, remains unleavened. That Church has been preserved, walking in the ways of the Lord, and kept in purity of doctrine, none of her members being known to have the slightest sympathy with the unsound doctrine in question—a fact which must rejoice the heart of every godly Christian, for charity "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth."

What warrant, then, we may again ask, can the "Exclusive Brethren" derive from this passage, so often quoted and so much pressed, for cutting off a Church which one of their most esteemed supporters thus described:—"Humble, upright, unworldly ways have long characterized her; services of singular praise to God are connected with her."* And how absurd, we may add, is the sophism that any one of her many members is so impregnated with evil that a single visit from him would defile every assembly of saints which received him throughout the world!

* Letter from the late Mr. J. G. Bellett to Mr. Victor of Bristol.

The honoured pastors of that church are described by Mr. Trotter as—"beloved brethren"—"brethren at whose feet I feel myself unworthy to sit"—"often have I had to thank God for the refreshment administered to my soul through the writings of the one; and often have I been humbled at the thought of the faith and devotedness of both the one and the other."—*The Whole Case of Plymouth and Bethesda*, (page 36).

CHAPTER IV.

RESULTS.

How true and searching is the Scriptural test by which we may form a sound estimate either of individuals or of systems! "*The tree is known by his fruit.*" (Matt. xii. 33.) Let us apply this test to the system in question.

"The fruit of *the Spirit* is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance;" while, on the other hand, amongst the works of *the flesh* are enumerated "hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings."

Would the "Exclusive Brethren" bear with us, if, in faithful love, we inquire of them which of those clusters of fruit their system has tended to produce?

Towards your brethren whom you have cast out, has there been an exhibition of that *love* which "suffereth long and is kind"—that love which "seeketh not her own"—which "thinketh no evil," which "bears, forbears, hopes, endures all things," yea, which "never fails"? What answer to this question is furnished by the tracts which you have published? Had love guided the pen, could such false accusations, such misrepresentation of motives, such distortion of facts, such harshness and intolerance, have dropped from it?

What brotherly love is shown in the use of opprobrious names, and scurrilous language? Is it divine charity which suggests offensive epithets, and applies them to devoted Christian brethren, and fellow-ministers of Christ?*

Are these the fruits of "a good tree?" Let conscience speak.

Has Christian charity, that greatest grace, without which all gifts and knowledge are but "as sounding brass, and a tinkling

* In a pamphlet, printed nearly twenty years ago, we find a number of low and odious epithets applied by a prominent individual to certain brethren, and understand they have never been recalled and confessed. Had they been so, it would be an offence against the law of love to refer to them. But such sin ought to be confessed, or to be publicly rebuked.

Recent repetitions of this sin are proof that there has been no repentance. In a certain quarter the third chapter of James appears to have been studied to little profit. "My brethren, these things ought not so to be." (Ch. iii. 10.)

cymbal," been shown towards those whom you have cut off for refusing to condemn the Bethesda brethren, because they preferred the patience of hopeful grace to the severity of immediate excision? What going after them has there been? What seeking to do them good? What binding up of that which was broken, or strengthening of that which was sick? Alas! have not the flowings of Christian love been completely frozen up? Have not the strongest ties of brotherhood been esteemed as nothing? Have not those excluded been as completely overlooked as if they had ceased to exist? Has not the language of *actions* been, "We have nothing more to do with them. The world may seduce them; the flesh may overcome them; the devil may make havoc of them—it is not our affair." "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears." God of compassion as well as holiness, wilt Thou not teach Thy children to be more like Thyself!

And wherever exclusivism has gained an entrance, has *joy* been one of its fruits? We must leave the melancholy tale to be told by embittered lives, and broken hearts, and even dethroned reason; by the severing of the sweetest ties of Christian friendship, the breaking the bonds of family endearment, the disruption of spiritual relationships and Christian communion; the separation of pastors from their flocks, and flocks from their pastors!

And has not this system, with its unceasing variance, strife and divisions, been even more antagonistic to *peace* than to love and joy? What an incalculable amount of energy, and what numberless hours have been wasted in fruitless controversy and contention, not for "the faith once delivered to the saints," but for a human tradition, which makes "void the commandment of God!"

Nor is it merely with regard to this Bethesda question that the "Exclusive" system is so adverse to *peace*. It is so, in its very *nature*. If every meeting of "Exclusives" has the right invariably to impose its discipline on every other, cases must and do continually arise, which lead to a repetition of the whole process of division of "gatherings," wherever "gatherings" exist to be divided—in other words, every diversity of judgment as to a case of discipline, becomes in principle a "Bethesda question" over again.*

* As an illustration of this very important point, see Appendix B.

And as to "*long-suffering, gentleness, meekness,*" may we not say, it is to the absence of these graces that exclusiveism owes its existence? Had the Brethren "in honour preferred one another," and submitted one to another in the fear of God, their sorrowful divisions had never taken place. The hastiness of nature, the impetuosity of self-will, the impatience of opposition, natural to the flesh, have alas! been indulged instead, and the result has been "*variance, emulations, wrath, strife.*" Oh that Exclusive "pastors" would heed the rebuke of the prophet,— "The *diseased* have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was *sick*, neither have ye bound up that which was *broken*, neither have ye brought again that which was *driven away*, neither have ye sought that which was *lost*; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them, and they were scattered."

"The tree is known by his fruit." "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit." We have been showing the absence of the "good fruit" on the tree of Exclusiveism. Must we now give some further specimens of the "evil fruit" which the "corrupt tree" has produced?

The persistency with which Mr. Darby and some of his friends continue to allege the same charges against Bethesda—charges which have been again and again refuted—is extraordinary. Whether it is to be accounted for by the blinding influences of party spirit, or to be attributed to delusion or monomania, we must leave the reader to judge. Some samples have been given. We will now give some instances of *misrepresentation*.

The case is generally so mis-stated (unintentionally we would hope), that an impression the very opposite to the truth is conveyed.

Take for illustration a tract entitled, "*The Bethesda Fellowship, 1866,*" London, Morrish. The writer, after beseeching God's blessing, says he wishes to give "a true statement of past events," and then he gives *an exceedingly incorrect one*. He says, "I begin with a short statement of Mr. Newton's doctrines." And accordingly he gives, in his own words, a summary of doctrines originally taught by Mr. Newton; but he omits to tell the reader that eighteen years ago, Mr. Newton renounced and confessed this teaching as sin.*

Yet he is not ignorant of the fact, for he subsequently alludes

* See Appendix A.

to it, calling this "retractation" "a mere cunning device" which is used by some "to blind the minds of the saints." Is this fair? Why did he not give a copy of the document that the reader might form his own opinion respecting it? and what shall we say of the expression he uses to describe it?

He then reiterates the great charge against Bethesda, that in 1848 they "received into communion persons known to be in fellowship with Mr. Newton;" but he never *mentions* either the fact that the assembly at Plymouth from which these persons came, had previously put forth a statement, *disclaiming the unsound doctrines* attributed to them,* nor the other fact, that these persons, four in number, were not received until personal examination had satisfied all parties that they did not hold the error in question. In short, in his opening statement, he *gives the impression*—that Bethesda received people freely from Mr. Newton's assembly, while *he* was teaching, and *they* were imbibing fundamental heresy: which was, as he ought to know, entirely contrary to the fact.

When subsequently obliged to admit that Bethesda did judge the evil doctrine of Mr. Newton, the writer adds:—

"The judgment is as follows: 'That no one defending, maintaining, or upholding Mr. Newton's views or tracts should be admitted into communion.' Now just calmly examine what such a judgment is worth. It is brought forward to show that Bethesda has acted for God and against this heresy; and it is used to cover over the previous evil conduct, and to obliterate the letter of the ten. Now, if it was right for Bethesda to judge the evil in *November*, 1848, it was most wicked not to do so in *June*."

The fact is, that in June 1848 the tracts to be judged were not before the public; they had been withdrawn in the previous autumn. Whilst in the interim, between June and November, 1848, a pamphlet had appeared from the pen of Mr. Newton, in which some of the doctrines objected to were taught in a modified form. And this fact the author never mentions. Thus what with rashness he terms "most wicked," is obviously most righteous.

Alas! that an earnest young Christian should have allowed himself to be so blinded by partizanship as to give such erroneous representations of facts.

We subjoin a few more specimens of this writer's unjust accusations. They are selected almost at random from a mass of others:—

* See Statement from Christians Assembling, &c., p. 8.

“—— the wicked and ungodly ways of Bethesda in reference to this heresy” (p. 7).

“It is very easy to say ‘We don’t recognise Bethesdaism in the Church.’ *It is there, and means fellowship with evil, and that evil, blasphemous doctrines about Christ*” (p. 25).

“Those who received from Mr. Newton’s party and Bethesda refused to judge *evil blasphemy against Christ*” (p. 6).

“You may take the ground of saying, it does not matter to us where Christians come from, or what evil they are connected with in the earth; if they only are believed to be Christians, and we believe them to be individually sound, we receive them. Well, *that is Bethesda ground.*” (p. 26).—“*Neutrality to the defamation of the person of the adorable Son of God*” (p. 9).

Let the reader contrast this statement of “Bethesda ground” with that of her departed pastor (see page 13), and seriously draw conclusions as to the spirit which could dictate such a statement!

Of course the arguments of this tract being based upon such misrepresentations are worthless. We merely quote it because its recent date proves that misrepresentation is still used by the “Exclusive Brethren” in the maintenance of their otherwise indefensible position.

We take up another tract, published also by Morrish, the publisher to the “Exclusive Brethren.” On its title page it professes to give “*Evidence of the departure from the principles of truth, holiness, and loyalty to Christ,*” which, in the opinions of “Exclusives,” has taken place among their rejected Brethren!

The following *assertions* are specimens of the *evidence* adduced. The reader who knows the history may judge of their worth:—

“I cannot own that to be the table of the Lord which *in principle and practice admits of His dishonour, and yours does both,*” (p. 7).

“I look upon every Christian coming from Bethesda as one who has *defaced his Christian title*, and with respect to you (who receive such), I cannot own your right to the Lord’s table while you are *associated with others upon the principle that the glory of Christ may be sullied, provided Christians are the parties concerned in it.* It is practical indifference to Christ,” (p. 12).

“It is a wretched plea (*which you use, is implied*), that the ruin of the Church is a reason for *submission to evil, subversive of all moral principle, and sense of what is due to Christ,*” (p. 18).

“This indifference to evil (that is, the course attributed to Bethesda) subverts right feeling in the heart towards Christ, making His beloved and glorious person an abstract point of doctrine of little importance—an error of opinion or judgment which is no ground for exclusion. In other words, if Christians will only love one another and be united together like good children, *it is no matter what they think about Christ. They may give Him up as of little consequence. He is only a matter of opinion; the Christian is a great deal more,*” (p. 24).

One is at a loss whether to marvel most at the untruthfulness, however unintentional, of this paragraph, or at its palpable absurdity. They must be lacking indeed in common sense, who can regard these groundless and slanderous assertions as "*Evidence*." The writer's own erroneous impressions are stated *as if facts*, and then the right feelings of all Christian hearts are excited, against what? Fancies of his own brain, myths! Again—

"You meet in the name of Christians, not Christ, for your principle of association is your own estimate of a man's Christianity, not Christ Himself and the truth of His person," (p. 25).

Whatever this may mean (and what it does mean it is not easy to determine), every honorable man will shrink from the injustice of attributing to others a "principle of association," which they would indignantly repudiate. We look on and on, page after page, for "*evidence*," and find only accusations such as these—

"Under the specious form of charity for Christians, *every blessing* essential to the existence of the Church here and characteristic of this dispensation, *has been sacrificed*," (p. 30).

"Your society is virtually *a society for the toleration of evil in saints*," (p. 31).

But enough. We turn with feelings of sadness from such an exhibition of unfairness and absurd audacity, merely adding, as a further illustration, that in the Appendix the author makes fourteen quotations from Mr. Newton's tracts withdrawn eighteen years ago, and *not a single one* from his present numerous published works, thus conveying the impression that Mr. Newton still holds what he has long since disavowed.

Nor is this unfairness peculiar to him. We are sorry to say, as far as we have seen, it is the almost invariable habit of the "Exclusive Brethren" to refer, *not* to Mr. Newton's later publications (respecting which it is not within the scope of this pamphlet to give any opinion whatever), but to those which were *withdrawn from circulation* so many years ago—and this, observe, is done under a profession of zeal for the glory of Christ!

Inconsistency is another fruit of Exclusiveism, and it is so glaring that it is a marvel candid minds are not arrested and repelled by it alone.

The system, for instance, treats Christians who would go to Bethesda or receive from it, as "*abbettors of blasphemy*;" and as

such, it utterly rejects them from the Lord's table. Yet it allows of the most intimate social intercourse with them in private—the very thing expressly forbidden in the passage (2 John) which is so strongly pressed in support of the Exclusive system.

“Exclusive Brethren” will receive such into their houses, and partake of their hospitality in return ; they will pray and sing with them in social worship, and study the Word together ; but they dare not “show forth the Lord's death” with such, as thereby they would become themselves “*abettors of blasphemy!*” Thus Exclusiveism is condemned on its own principles. Far as it goes, it does not, to be consistent, go far enough. It permits free social intercourse, and even communion in private worship, with those whom *it regards as “abettors of blasphemy!”* Surely, if consistent, the “Exclusive Brethren” ought not to have any more to do with such persons than they would with the disciples of Paine or Voltaire! Which horn of the dilemma will they accept? Will they renounce all intercourse whatever with thousands of blameless saints, or will they renounce the absurd fallacy that constitutes them “*abettors of blasphemy?*”

Nor are these Brethren consistent even in their testimony against evil doctrine. We hear much of their “zeal for the person of Christ.” If it be genuine, how is it, that it is not equally aroused by all unsound teaching respecting the blessed Lord? Why does it not deal *impartially* with *all* who have gone beyond what is written, and used expressions, which, if carried to their logical conclusions, subvert fundamental truth?

The “Exclusive Brethren” are strenuous in denouncing the doctrines once put forth by Mr. Newton as blasphemy, yet they endorse views of *a similar character* as truth! Strange as it may seem, Mr. Darby has made statements respecting the sufferings of Christ, which are judged by many to be “*as bad*”* as those long since retracted by Mr. Newton. Their unscriptural character and dangerous tendency has often been pointed out to him by his opponents, and latterly by some of his oldest friends and followers, yet they remain unretracted and upheld. His disciples have so developed these views that some of their recent writings teach doctrines about the cross and death of Christ which are, alas! decidedly opposed to some of the most vital and fundamental truths of Scripture.

* See “Grief upon Grief, by P. F. H.,” page 5.

We give some of the objectionable passages alluded to in the appendix, that the reader may form his own judgment respecting them.* Had they been from the pen of Mr. Newton, they would, doubtless, have been condemned as "horrid blasphemy" and "abominable evil." We are at a loss to know, then, by what process of spiritual alchemy, they become transmuted into truth. Alas! are we to come to the mournful conclusion, that party spirit has so blinded the eyes of the "Exclusive Brethren," that it is no longer a question of *what* is said, but of *who* has said it? Why does not the zeal for Christ, which so loudly demanded recantation, confession, and humiliation formerly, arouse itself anew to demand them now? Does not such *inconsistency* absolutely prove a fatal hollowness, and indicate party spirit as the motive of the conduct in question? The "Exclusive Brethren" have professed a special zeal for the glory of Christ, and boasted of their readiness to sacrifice to it every other consideration; and we would heartily join them in saying, better a thousand times let every fellowship on earth go to pieces, and walk in lonely solitude all one's days, than be accessory to any dishonouring of the Son of God! But can they not give others credit for as real and deep a desire for the glory of Christ as their own? Do they really think they love Him better than all His Church besides? Is it perfectly clear that their course does tend more to His honour than the humble attempt to receive those whom He has received, and walk in love with all saints? However, *the sincerity of all this high profession is now put to the test*; doctrines are being taught in their midst touching Christ and His cross, which are as abhorrent to every instinct of our spiritual being, as they are contrary to the plainest statements of Scripture. They are earnestly called on to protest against these. *How will they act?*

Seeing, then, that "the tree is to be known by his fruits," what opinion must we form of the tree of "Exclusiveism?" "Love, joy, peace, gentleness, meekness, goodness," are not the lovely clusters which adorn its branches. Many who have been ensnared into the system may manifest much of these graces, but they are not the natural and characteristic products of the system itself. These products are rather, as we have seen, the bitter fruit of uncharitable misrepresentations, false accusa-

* See Appendix D.

tion, unjust partiality, unwarrantable assumption, and glaring inconsistency. Can we, then, do otherwise than conclude that the system itself is a "corrupt tree"? Can we do otherwise than conclude that, notwithstanding their assumption of peculiar purity, and their long and loud accusations of defilement against others, it is the "Exclusive" assemblies themselves that are *really* defiled by the presence of active evil, unconfessed and unjudged, in their midst—evil of a glaring kind, both practical and doctrinal?

CHAPTER V.

CONCLUSION.

HAVING now given the facts of this schism among the "Brethren," having examined the Scriptures by which the "Exclusive" position is supported, and having shown some of the sad results of the system, we cannot conclude without a few words of appeal and expostulation.

When we took up our pen, it was specially for the sake of those recently converted, who are in danger of being drawn aside into a by-path, conducive neither to their own spiritual prosperity, nor to the healthy exercise of their talents in the service of the Lord. It would be a source of deep thankfulness to God, if, through His blessing, more extended benefit should result from our humble labours. We cannot but think that amongst the "Exclusive Brethren" there are numbers of most true-hearted and conscientious believers who never would have taken the position which they occupy, had they been acquainted with the facts which we have briefly detailed. Brethren, in the name of Him whom you love, and for His sake, we would affectionately invite you to reconsider your present position. Do the facts of this case warrant the course which has been pursued? Have matters been conducted according to the mind of the Lord, and under the guidance of His Spirit? Is the controversy and strife which prevail really for the glory of the Lord, or are they a detriment and dishonour to His cause? The subject is to you one of deepest importance and solemnity. Its issues are not merely connected with time, but extend into a long and approaching eternity.

Brethren! we appeal to your hearts! Are you happy in your isolated and antagonistic position? Are you happy in being separated from your fellow-believers—fellow-members with you of the body of Christ, fellow-soldiers in the battle with sin and Satan, fellow-workers in the vineyard of the Lord, fellow-heirs of the glories of the future?

We appeal to your impartial judgments! We ask whether the system which has been maintained with such pertinacity, did not *originate* in an act of hastiness and assumption, which cannot

have had the divine blessing? Even supposing that Bethesda was erring in judgment and lacking in faithfulness, how should Mr. Darby have acted in the case? Should he not have convened a meeting of brethren in Christ, with whom he and they were in fellowship, and, bringing the whole matter before them, and before the Lord, have sought counsel from them, and power from on high, for the reclaiming and restoration of the erring Church at Bristol? Did he not, in taking the whole matter into his own hands, violate the fundamental principles of the Brethren, acting independently of them instead of consulting with them? Did he not thus offend against their rights, and virtually ignore the existence of the Church at large, of which he was but a single and solitary member? Did he not, in the self-sufficiency of his own heart, act as if he were himself the Church of God? Did he not imitate the assumption of Rome when he issued his circular, excommunicating, as far as lay within his power, not only one assembly of God's saints, but all assemblies who would receive a solitary believer from it? Nay, more, did he not virtually ignore the power of prayer, and the grace of a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God?

Think you, brethren, that God was likely to own this act of self-will, assumption, and intolerance? Now such an act without distinct warrant from God must have been *sin*; and we ask you, as in the presence of the Lord, *can that which thus began in sin, lead to blessing?* Has it done so?

And, brethren, can you lend your sanction to the manner in which the schismatic principles of Mr. Darby's original circular have been ever since carried out? Can you, with an easy conscience, remain in a system which is upheld by erroneous statements and calumnious charges? "Humble, upright, and unworldly ways," and "services of singular praise to God," are the characteristics of the church at Bethesda, in the judgment of one who honoured it as a bright witness for Christ, though he dissented from its discipline in the case before us; and yet that is the church which is branded by Mr. Darby as "*a terrible sink of iniquity*," its honoured Pastor being spoken of in terms which we

* It has been well asked:—"Who can estimate the dishonour done to the name of Jesus, the awful amount of mischief produced, by the one lithographed circular of Mr. Darby? I cannot suppose that any one act of any one person, in our day, has produced such evil consequences in the Church of God."

should be ashamed to repeat. We confess it is an enigma to us, how any one with a sense of what is due to truth and holiness, or even with a spark of generous feeling in his bosom, can refrain from testifying against such disreputable and ungodly conduct.

As to the unsound doctrines once taught at Plymouth, they have been condemned by the Bethesda Brethren as well as by yourselves. Why, then, perpetuate the remembrance of them? Why continue a fruitless controversy respecting the nature, experiences and sufferings of the blessed Lord? These are themes so sacred, that the spirit of worship better becomes us in approaching them than that of critical analysis. Let us eschew all mere theological anatomy. It is safer simply to receive the teachings of Scripture on such subjects than to attempt their explanation. We have seen teachers on both sides betrayed into error in presumptuously attempting to withdraw the veil which God has thrown around them. "Draw not nigh hither, put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground," may well be addressed to curious and rash explorers in regions of sacred mystery!

Though thankful that the grievous errors referred to were detected, we cannot but regret the ungracious and unbrotherly spirit manifested towards their author; nor can we refrain from entering our protest against the treatment which he subsequently received and still receives. The errors which he renounced are still continually attributed to him. The tracts which he withdrew are still quoted as if before the public. He is represented as having derived his prophetic views "*by direct inspiration of Satan*;"* and for nearly twenty years he has been stigmatized in a way too painful to describe.†

* In his "Plain Statement of the Sufferings of the Lord" (p. 16), Mr. Darby says:—"I have not the least doubt, from circumstances I have heard lately, of the authenticity of which I have not the smallest doubt, that Mr. Newton received his prophetic system *by direct inspiration of Satan*."

In December, 1846, four years after the publication of Mr. Newton's work, "*Thoughts on the Apocalypse*," which unfolded his "*prophetic system*," the London Brethren, corresponding with Mr. Newton respecting "the unhappy circumstances that had arisen amongst them," (the dissensions at Plymouth), and appealing to Mr. Newton, as they say, "*as a body*," address him as a "*beloved brother*." It is not easy to reconcile these terms of warm, fraternal affection with "*direct inspiration of Satan*" of four years' standing!

† It has been observed by one well acquainted with the facts:—"Even if there could be found in the withdrawn tracts every conceivable form of

In reviewing the history of this sad case we also deeply lament the disastrous results which have befallen many, who have been drawn away from active service and entangled in the meshes of controversial strife. How many hopeful young labourers for the Lord have made shipwreck on this rock! Brethren, have you not to answer for this? Does not the guilt lie at your door? How many a young believer have you found lovingly, humbly, and prayerfully seeking to win souls to Christ; and now, what is he? and what is he doing? His soul is withered by conversing with error rather than with truth—by feeding more upon controversy about heresy than upon the bread of life. He is puffed up with self-conceit. He is more intent on judging others than himself. He is full of questions and crotchets. He wastes his time in splitting hairs and discussing points. He has lost his missionary zeal, has given up his simple and blessed service to the Lord, and has embarked his best energies in the miserable crusade of making converts to a party.* And thus, in the end, he has become a positive troubler of the Church, and an “obstructive” to the work of the Lord!

Consider further, brethren, your position is in entire variance with the principles you originally avowed. When you commenced your course, you met as the “twos” and the “threes” in the confession of conscious weakness. You met in the name of the Lord Jesus, as members of the one scattered family of faith. You recognised the common title of all those who had

error, no one would have any right to produce them in evidence against him, as they have been publicly withdrawn, and other works issued in their stead. In these works Mr. Newton has taken great pains to state clearly and unmistakeably the doctrines he holds, and he has also repudiated again and again the sentiments imputed to him, but the false charges are, nevertheless, continually retailed in the most shameful manner.” “I do not think that a similar case of systematic and prolonged perversion of a writer’s statements, and unjust use of his writings, could be found in the annals of controversy; and I verily believe that an analogous proceeding in any of the literary or political societies, would bring down upon the perpetrator a condemnation which he would justly deserve.”

*The most successful weapon in the hands of these propagandists has been the appeal—“What! can *you* be indifferent to the glory of Christ? Where Christ is dishonoured, can *you* be neutral?” Now, although the parties using this language may be both truthful and honest, yet there is a clear fallacy involved in the appeal, inasmuch as it assumes the point to be proved—that those who cannot approve their course *are* indifferent to the dishonour of the Lord. It is easy to imagine how powerfully such an appeal must act on a person of tender conscience, *ignorant of the facts*.

been washed in the blood of the Lamb, irrespective of the particular communion to which they might specially belong. But *now* you have left this broad ground. You have erected high walls which separate you from your brethren in Christ. You exclude some of the holiest and brightest of God's saints. You protest against systems, and boast of not being a sect, and yet you have systematized yourselves into one of the narrowest of sects. To be a member of your body, it is not enough to be a child of God, walking in communion with Him, and in the full confession of the truth. You practically say, the credentials of Heaven and of the Word of God are not enough. The rights of private judgment must be given up. There must be an agreement to cut off, without a hearing, all that you cut off, and to worship only with those with whom you consent to worship. You impose it on those in your communion to "*judge the question*"—that is, to pronounce the sentence of condemnation on the brethren at Bethesda. You thus establish a new term of communion, and virtually add to the Word of God. Were St. Paul himself resuscitated, you would not, according to your principles, receive him, unless, indeed, he engaged neither "to go to Bethesda," nor to "gatherings" where persons from it are "knowingly admitted." God *brings in*; but thousands of those whom He brings in you *put out*. Herein, brethren, you are destroying His work, and are in direct collision with Himself. Alas! what is the measure of such a sin!

We say you have boldly abandoned your original principles. Twenty years ago, Mr. Darby himself maintained that the Church was "*in ruins*," and that you were "*the witnesses of the weakness and low estate of the Church*."* You protested against the "pretensions that two or three, or two or three and twenty are entitled to take the name of the Church of God;" because "that Church was (originally) *an assemblage of all believers*."† But now, in the million-peopled city of London, with its tens of

* "I have *always* said this. I know it has troubled some, even those I specially love, but *I am sure it is the Lord's mind*. I have said, we are *the witnesses of the weakness and low estate of the Church*."—*Letter from Mr. J. N. Darby to Mr. Jukes. February, 1846.—New Opinions of the Brethren*, p. 37.

† "Before I can accede to your pretensions I must see that an union of two or three, or two or three and twenty, are entitled to take the name of the Church of God, when that Church was (originally) an assemblage of all believers."—*Reflections on the Ruined Condition of the Church*, p. 9.

thousands of true believers, your little section of the Church, which forms so inconsiderable a fraction of the whole body, assumes to be "THE ONE ASSEMBLY OF GOD IN LONDON."*

Twenty years ago Mr. Darby wrote, "If we think to set up the Church again, I would say, God forbid."† But already you have swept away the ruins and "set up again," a proud structure of ecclesiastical assumption.

Twenty years ago you maintained that, "those who have been endeavouring to form Churches, seem, though meaning well, to have entirely forgotten our need of *power*, as well as of *direction*."‡ Yet *now* you seem to have entirely forgotten your own words, and "have been endeavouring to form" a peculiar Church of your own, arrogating both divine "*power*" and divine "*direction*" of no ordinary kind.

Twenty years ago Mr. Darby said, "*Power the Church has none*,"§ and yet *now* you assume power of the highest order, and exercise it in a most despotic manner. You grasp the iron sceptre, and wield it with an unsparing hand, calling for immediate and unconditional submission, or—excommunication!

Twenty years ago you held that it is having departed "from the acknowledgment of the ruin of the Church, which has been *the weakness of the Brethren*;"|| and yet *now* you consider the departure from a position of weakness to be the very essence of your strength.

Twenty years ago you laid it down authoritatively, that "*to impose a verdict (upon others) which cannot be debated, is the most*

* In the printed "Correspondence of the Walworth and Priory Gatherings," the titles assumed are "The One Assembly of God in London" and "The One Church of God in London." The former occurs very frequently. At page 7 we find the words "There is but one assembly of God in London."

The assumption of this title "in any exclusive or even complete sense" has been disclaimed in other places.

† Letter from Mr. Darby to Mr. Jukes, February, 1846.

‡ Ruin of the Church, p. 18.

§ *Idem*.—"Hence government of bodies, in an authorized way, I believe there is none: where this is assumed I believe there will be confusion.—Letter from Mr. J. N. Darby to Mr. Jukes, February, 1846.

|| "Without answering for every expression in it (Mr. Juke's tract—"Thoughts on the Ruin of the Church"), instead of quarrelling with it as an objection, as to the general bearing and object of it, I believe that it is having departed from what has suggested itself in your mind, *which has been the weakness of the Brethren*."—Letter from Mr. Darby to Mr. Jukes, February, 1846.

monstrous thing that ever was heard of;" and for the clergy to dictate to the conscience of the Church "which can only register and give weight to their decrees," "is *pure unmasked Popery*."* And yet shortly afterwards one of yourselves, yes, the very one who wrote the above words (ignoring "the conscience of the Church"), issued his "decree"—published his "verdict which cannot be debated" under penalty of instant excommunication; and thus dashed "Brethrenism" to pieces, and established (according to his own words) "pure unmasked Popery" in its stead.

Some twenty years ago you were foremost in proclaiming the great truth of the unity of the body. You went so far as to say that "whatever hinders the manifestation on earth of that oneness which Christians have in Christ is this sin of schism" . . . that "the moment anything is introduced as a point of unity which the Lord has not commanded, there is room for the sin of schism;" and that every basis *not broad enough for the whole Church to meet on* proclaims this sin.† And yet within a few short years you have fallen into this very sin which you so justly condemned, by introducing a test which few can adopt, and for which from Genesis to Revelation there is no warrant to be found, thus excommunicating thousands of the most faithful and devoted of God's people.

Truly, brethren, you have departed from your original principles. You have left the lowly place and have taken the high place. You have renounced the position of weakness and taken that of power

* "To impose a *verdict which cannot be debated, is the most monstrous thing that ever was heard of. It is pure unmasked Popery, the clergy dictating to the conscience of the Church, which can only register and give weight to their decrees. Is the conscience of the Church to be disposed of thus by others, be they ever so wise?*"—*Account of Proceedings at Rawstone-street, in November and December, 1846, Part III., p. 5.*

"The Brethren believed this guidance of God could be reckoned upon. Hence they denied the necessity of the other human extreme—the Popish one—of a clergy *settling the matter amongst themselves and announcing it publicly, and the Church having nothing to do but to add its weight by its acts, to a decision pronounced by the authority of others*, which they were bound to receive implicitly, and as a conclusion arrived at for them, which could not be debated."—*Idem p. 7.*

† We refer the reader to the paper on this subject in "The Christian Witness."

The late Mr. Bellett, writing to Mr. M'A., December 26, 1849, and referring to the principles of the Brethren in their early days, described them as being "prepared for communion in the name of the Lord with *all, whoever they might be, who loved Him in sincerity.*"

and authority. You have forsaken the broad principles of the one family, and by claiming to be "*the one assembly of God*," you have unchurched all other Churches.

And on the subject of *defilement*, we would observe what an extraordinary moral phenomenon your history presents! Here are numbers of most worthy people, conscientious Christians too, who are so sensitive of evil, that they would not worship with an assembly of blameless Christians, holding no error, and desirous of walking in all things in subjection to the Word of God, lest, forsooth, they might be defiled with a taint of imaginary evil; and yet they remain in close and constant fellowship with those who not only hold most erroneous views, but who are in the practice of those very things which the Lord Jesus expressly declares "*defile a man*." (Mat. xv. 19.)

To explain ourselves, if explanation be needed. Here is one—we say it with sadness, who *speaks evil* of God's saints who are found walking in holiness and in fellowship with Him, and *rails* against them—one who goes up and down "*causing divisions*" among simple-minded Christians, who, but for him, might live and die in happy ignorance of these questions, so prolific of evil; and although the Word of God tells us that "*evil speakings*"* "*defile the man*;" although it tells us not "*to keep company*" or even "*to eat*" with one who is "*a railer*;" although it tells us to mark those "*that cause divisions*," and to "*avoid them*;" yet without acknowledgment or confession on his part, he is received with open arms by those who profess such zeal for the purity of the house of God, and welcomed, not only to the Lord's table, but to the teacher's chair!

Brethren, receive a parting word of exhortation. We speak in faithfulness but in love. We have no private or personal object to serve. Our deep desire is to see all the Lord's people combine, if not "*with one mind*," at least "*with one heart*" for the advancement of His kingdom.

We should rejoice to see your relationship towards your fellow-believers at large what it originally was; to see you take your stand once more upon the broad ground of *the oneness of the body of Christ*; to see you practically recognise every member of that body as your brother. We long to see you renounce your sad

* In the authorized version rendered "blasphemies," Mat. xv. 19. See Appendix C.

position of antagonism towards others, and cultivating again fellowship with all saints walking in holiness and in truth. O brethren, let us seek to consider the whole Church, and yearn over it more as Christ does. Every member is dear to Him; let every member be dear to us. Let us seek to comprehend, "WITH ALL SAINTS" the love of Christ to all, and then strive to manifest it to all!

And then as to the world without—oh! let us remind you of the thousands, nay, millions around us that are going down to eternal perdition. Do we really believe it? What cold and stony hearts are ours, that we look upon this living mass of human beings descending into the gulf of everlasting ruin, without being stirred up to earnest prayer and strenuous effort to rescue them from destruction! God has saved us, not that we might spend our few remaining days in dissensions, in "questions and strifes of words;" but that we might *unite* in labouring for the ingathering of the "fulness of the Gentiles," and the "perfecting of the body of Christ."

Awake, brethren, awake! The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Even now the first faint streaks of its approaching light may be discerned in the Eastern sky. What are ye doing for God? What are ye doing for the world? *Christ died for it!* What are ye doing for it? What, for the millions of our countrymen?—what, for the tens of millions on the Continent?—what, for the hundreds of millions of heathendom? See the dark tide of infidelity stealing over the expanse of Europe, —wave after wave washing away the feeble barriers that oppose its progress, promising no pause till a dead sea of utter atheism cover the whole! And look at China, where are more than four hundred millions of immortal souls who have never even heard the glorious gospel of the blessed God! Oh! what do we for them? Why stand we idle? Is our religion a pretence or a reality? Is the command—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," repealed? Every month of our existence carries away more than three millions of fellow-creatures, with bodies and souls like our own—carries them silently away, as with a flood in the night! Whither? Have we forgotten? Are there no voices out of the depths into which they are gone? Are there no curses hurled back at an unfaithful Church, which uttered no warning voice, and stretched out no loving hand, but wasted

those energies in bickerings and strifes, which ought to have been put forth in labours for the salvation of a dying world? Is there no blood of souls upon our garments? Blood! alas! are they not soaked in it? Every man is his brother's keeper; to let him perish unwarned is *murder*! Talk of "judging evil!" Have we judged *this evil*? Have we judged ourselves? Brethren! "Be not deceived! God is not mocked! Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." Names, and words, and high-flown professions go for nought with Him. True religion and undefiled is practical holiness and active love. God has set a work before us. The field is the world—the world of souls; the work, His will, His service, the holy humble walk, the labouring fervently in prayer, the witnessing for Jesus and His truth, the wrestling against principalities and powers, the pulling down of strongholds of iniquity, the ceaseless spreading of the great salvation, the hastening of His eternal kingdom of glory—and this in the faith and in the power of His might! Oh! let us arise and do it, and our God shall bless us of a truth!

G.

March, 1867.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX A.—PAGE 7.

* * * * *

I do not now enter into a statement of the limitations by which this doctrine was guarded in my own mind, and in my teaching. I had supposed that the limitations which I employed were sufficient to prevent the deductions which have been recently drawn—and that, in many cases, legitimately—*deductions which I abhor as thoroughly as those can by whom they have been drawn.* I trust that I can appeal to any of my writings in which the person and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus are spoken of, as well as to persons who have known me as a Christian or a teacher, for proof that deductions which go to involve the fitness of the Lord for his blessed work of atonement, could never have been contemplated by me; and that they are entirely opposed to, and contrasted with, the whole current of my teaching and aim and thoughts.

I wish to state distinctly that I hold the perfectness of Christ's person and the completeness of His one sacrifice to be truths so solemnly unquestionable that every doctrine or opinion must be subordinated to, and guided by these leading and foundation truths; and every statement of mine on the relations of Christ, whether in *my recent tracts which I have now withdrawn*, or in any other place, I wish to subject entirely to these primary truths. I desire that every statement with respect to such subordinate truth should be strictly guarded with the limitations which the afore-mentioned foundation truths supply.

It is not my desire to extend the present remarks. I would merely state that I do distinctly hold that there never was any thing in the personal, relative, or dispensational positions of Christ which could have prevented His being at any one moment of His life the perfect and unblemished sacrifice, and that not one suffering, whence soever originating, ever came upon Him, except because of and for the sake of *others*.

I would not wish it to be supposed that what I have now said is intended to extenuate the error which I have confessed; I desire to acknowledge it fully, and to acknowledge it as sin; it is my desire thus to confess it before God and His Church; and I desire that this may be considered as an expression of my deep and unfeigned grief and sorrow especially by those who may have been grieved or injured by the false statement, or by any consequences thence resulting. I trust that the Lord will not only pardon, but will graciously counteract any evil effects which may have arisen to any therefrom.

B. W. NEWTON.

Plymouth, November 26th, 1847.

The following statement of Mr. Newton's views on fundamental truth, is from a "Letter to a Friend," published by Houlston and Stoneman, 1850:—

"I am thankful to be able to say, that I hold (and so does Bishop Pearson) that Christ, though He did assume a mortal body, was under no necessity of death *as we*—that He was ever in moral nearness to God, not less so on earth, than when He was in Heaven—that He was ever the object of the Father's complacency, delight, and love—that whether in the cradle, or in life, or on the Cross, He was alike morally perfect, as perfect as He now is in Heaven—perfect in all His inward experiences—perfect in all His outward ways, and therefore in both, unlike other men—that He never was *as* those for whom and with whom He suffered—that all His sufferings were as the Redeemer—all on behalf of others, and for their salvation. The doctrines of the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed I gladly accept, as well as the first seventeen Articles of the Church of England, as containing the truths for which I would desire to live and die."

APPENDIX B.—PAGE 27.

LEST it should be questioned whether the discipline of the "Exclusive Brethren" be correctly described in the foregoing pages, the writer thinks well to add a brief epitome of a more recent case which exemplifies its character and workings, and which incidentally reveals other features of their sad system.

Years had passed away since Mr. Darby's edict fell like a bomb-shell among brethren. Its direct work of destruction was well nigh done; division had followed division, wherever there were "Brethren" to be divided. The fuel was consumed, the fire waned—but the destructive *principle* continued to be recognised. The bond of sectarianism, which had replaced that of Christian fellowship, grew stronger year by year, until at length the "gatherings" in London (the centre of Exclusivism), sought to coalesce into a practical outward oneness, and assumed to themselves the title of "*The One Assembly of God in London.*" A form of government sprang up among them. The original doctrine of the "Brethren"—that as the Church was in ruins, government in it was out of the question, and *authority* impossible, was practically abandoned. A weekly self-constituted meeting of the leading brethren from the various assemblies in and around London began to issue circulars to the London meetings, intending to secure uniformity of action, and without *claiming* supreme authority, they exercised it. At last cases arose in which its decisions were questioned by one or other of the meetings; dissensions arose, and the result was *excision*. Consistency demanded it—liberty of conscience could no longer be allowed. *Yield or leave* was the alternative. But let the following case speak for itself.

Mr. A. S. (an esteemed minister of long standing among Brethren) had rendered himself somewhat obnoxious to one of the London meetings especially: a painful controversy ensued, and continued for years. At last, without any Scripture warrant, they excommunicated him. One or more of the London assemblies, dissatisfied with this sentence, requested that the case should be submitted to a general meeting, and the reason for this act of discipline investigated in order to arrive at a "unanimous,

righteous, and godly judgment concerning it." *This was refused.* Months of mutual coldness and distrust succeeded, until at length occasion offered for further proceedings. A notice from the Saturday Evening Meeting, disapproving a certain act* of one of these assemblies, was sent round to all the rest, stating that it had acted "in self-will." Subsequently, an individual from the disaffected meeting, presenting himself for fellowship elsewhere, was "challenged" as "not in communion." This led to an official notification from the Saturday Evening Meeting that the disaffected gathering, and its sympathizers, could not "be accredited at the Lord's table," till they were "humbled for their course;" i.e., all the believers who composed it, and all who in any way took their part, were cut off at a stroke, and that without a shadow of an attempt to adduce Scripture precept or precedent! Further—not only are the London meetings expected to yield to everything enacted by this Saturday Evening Meeting, but those all over the country also. On this occasion the "Exclusive" meeting at Sheffield, becoming aware of what had been done, wrote requesting explanations from both sides. These were given, and the result was, that they felt constrained to dissent from this summary discipline, inflicted on a sister Church. The following are extracts from the letter, in which they expressed this dissent to the excommunicated party.

"We cannot see that any assembly can rightly claim *unquestioning subjection to its decisions*. To do so, would be to deny fallibility on the one hand, and to exercise dominion over faith, and set aside exercise of conscience on the other. We ask what part of Scripture would teach or sanction this? We are aware that your having failed to receive as binding upon yourselves, the judgment of the Priory Brethren, in the case of our Brother A. S., *your having asked questions* in regard thereto, *and given reasons* why you dissented from it, as not having Scriptural sanction and authority, *is looked upon as rebellion to the Spirit's rule*. But we cannot believe this to be so, in fact or intention."

"We heartily wish the gatherings of saints both in town and country were led more fully both to realize and act out their own separate responsibilities. The very opposite of this is now pressed as right and godly. We are told that the only right way is to own all that has been done, and is being done, to be of the Holy Ghost, and to ask no questions. According to this, it is wrong and needless to have an exercised conscience; alas! this principle has been too long acted upon and assented to! In regard to much that has taken place in our gatherings, of the saddest and most distressing kind, *what multitudes of the saints have had and have misgivings!* What numbers there are amongst us who have not been and are not 'fully persuaded in their own mind.'"

This last passage is a touching confession of the soul-misery which many "Exclusive Brethren" have long endured in silence; endured, we fully believe, not from party spirit or dishonesty of purpose, but from mental inability to unravel the perplexing snare into which false teaching had drawn them, while their consciences and spiritual instincts forbade their feeling satisfied with the unchristian and schismatic *results* of that teaching. Now, mark the sentence that follows—remembering that it comes from those who have been for fifteen years or more on the "Exclusive" side:—

"In regard to the long-standing Bethesda trouble, we feel it right to

* The division of one meeting into two, for convenience sake; which resulted in a mere change of locality.

state that we judge with you, *that it is high time for the Bethesda test to be disannulled; and we shall henceforth hold ourselves free from it.* We believe it to be equally needless and useless. It is a question with many of us, *whether it ever brought any glory to God or good to man.** It cannot be a question with any of us as to the trouble, and shame, and confusion, and sorrow, and division, it has brought in among the saints. And further, we believe these Bethesda actings to be *false in principle*, in two ways. First, because, by a mistaken use of Scripture, it leads to the confounding of those who are sound in the faith and consistent in conduct, with heretics and evildoers, and subjects them to the same treatment. . . . And secondly, because they assume the right of some gatherings of saints to measure the responsibilities and prescribe the conduct of other gatherings of saints. Scripture does not warrant this." "We hold that no assembly has authority to dictate to or rebuke, or excommunicate, another assembly of real Christians. We have long had questionings in regard to this; present matters have led us to re-examine the subject prayerfully and carefully, in the light of Scripture, and the result is the conviction expressed above." "We cannot help expressing our conviction, that 'Brethren's principles' are being held and regarded as of *equal authority*

* The following sentiments on this point are from the pen of Mr. Dorman, for many years an active supporter of the Exclusive position:—"In the close of twenty-eight years' association with J. N. D.," he says, "such severity may have been necessary heretofore. I do not pronounce upon it, but I do not feel myself able any longer, as things are, to carry it out," (p. 8.) "It is impossible for me to regard any longer this law of exclusion as having *anything whatever to do with maintenance of purity of doctrine*, on which ground it was at first ostensibly inaugurated," (p. 37.) "It is a false principle for any man to issue a human decree as to how an evil is to be dealt with in the Church of God, instead of leaving it to the direction of the Divine Word. And it is falsely applied when directed against Christians, not because they themselves hold or favour error, but simply use that liberty of association which they do not see to be interdicted by the Lord," (p. 57.) "I cannot any longer pursue to 'the tenth generation' people who have no more to do with Mr. Newton's doctrine than I have, nor any more leaning towards it—merely because they cannot endorse Mr. D.'s decree, issued eighteen years ago, as to the way in which the evil must be dealt with if they would maintain themselves in his association. My heart has been withered by the necessity of schooling Christians—young and old, ignorant and well-informed—in the mysteries of an act of discipline of eighteen years' standing, and in endeavouring to show the present bearings of 'the Bethesda question' and 'the neutral party'—hateful phrases as they have become. At first, of course, all this was pursued as necessary to the maintenance of purity of doctrine and of 'a true Christ' amongst those who took part with Mr. D. in his position, and principles, and acts; and I honestly thought it so myself. But this guise is now utterly and rudely stripped away," (p. 59.) "The principle upon which the brethren were *originally* gathered together is a true one, and therefore cannot fail. It is this: 'Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.' But this is at the *utmost possible remove* from that *association of affiliated societies* into which they have *degenerated*. What possible correspondence is there between a company of Christians, or ever so many companies—meeting simply in the name of Christ, pretending to nothing, but counting on His presence as the spring and security of their blessing when so met, and that of an immense ecclesiastical ramification, which is everywhere subject, and in all things, as to its order, doctrine, and discipline, to Mr. D.'s decrees? enforced by a ubiquitous, unseen spiritual supervision, from which as there is no escape, so is there no appeal? The one is as wide and free as the gracious heart of Christ can make it; and as available too, where there is faith and humility enough to trust it. The other is as narrow and sectarian, and as hard also, as the domination of man can desire it," (p. 60.) Alluding to the recent developments of unsound doctrine in the Exclusive party, he says in his "Solemn Appeal:—"And when I recall the way in which a far less dangerous and pestilential error was met, contrasted with the supineness with which these inroads on the most fundamental of all truths are now viewed, I am driven upon the conclusion that the profession of zeal for Christ and truth was either then, or now, a mere *pretence?*" (p. 28.) "It is a conviction that none can escape from, that other interests than those of *truth* have been prosecuted with more zeal than even truth itself," (p. 30.)

with the Scriptures; and it appears to us, that if anyone acts at all contrary to 'received principles,' it is considered as bad as contravening Scripture or resisting the Holy Ghost."

This letter was signed by sixteen brethren on behalf of the assembly at Sheffield, and shortly after reaching this wise and Scriptural conclusion, they had an opportunity to act it out. A brother from the excluded London meeting who had for many years ministered among them with acceptance, visited them, and was received at the Lord's Table on November 22, 1863. Aware that this would be reported in an adverse spirit at the neighbouring meeting of Rotherham on the following Sunday, they wrote during the week, requesting their brethren there to suspend their judgment till they should hear their *own* account of the matter, and the reasons that had influenced them. The following is the reply which this request elicited! It shows that the "ad infinitum" and "corporate exclusion" theories still prevail. It is written by a teacher and ruler among the "Exclusive Brethren" at Rotherham, and bears the well-known initials, C. S.

"ROTHERAM, November 29th, 1863.

"DEAR BROTHER,

"I duly received your letter of yesterday, and read it to the saints assembled this morning around the Table of the Lord.

"I am requested to say, that inasmuch as you have now placed yourselves in the same position as Mr. G., viz.:—*outside the communion of saints gathered together in the name of Christ in London*, the gathering in Rotherham being in fellowship with those in London, cannot possibly receive any statement of the particulars of the matter, either written or by word of mouth. To do so they feel would be to ignore the discipline of the assembly in London, and practically to set aside discipline everywhere; as it virtually denies the unity of the body, and reduces every assembly to an independent congregation. Under these circumstances the saints at Rotherham are reluctantly compelled to decline any further communication till you have been led to retrace this sad step.

"Praying that the blessed Lord may speedily restore you to His own path, I am yours in Christ Jesus.

"C. S."

Without hearing a word of explanation a whole assembly of Christians, sound in faith, and consistent in practice, are thus at once EXCOMMUNICATED by their brethren! Thank God, *such* bindings on earth are *not* bound in heaven! Let it stand for what it is, a marvellous proof of the lengths to which false principles may lead even real disciples of the Lord of love and peace.

Observe—it is *assumed* that the Brethren in London *acted by the Holy Ghost*, and because their infallibility was *questioned*, those who question it, are said to be *breaking* the unity of the body.

The Sheffield Brethren may well say, "*Who* is breaking the unity, and hindering the fellowship of the Spirit among us? Ought honest differences of judgment on one or two non-essential points hinder all the issues of life and love toward each other? We think not. (Rom. xiv. 4, 13, 19; Col. ii. 18, 19.) Let us add, *emphatically, that we do not, and would not, set aside any act of godly discipline, agreeable to the directions of the Word*, but we cannot own, as having the Lord's authority,

acts like these, pleading *no Scripture warrant*, and which savour so much of arbitrary ecclesiastical domination! They appear, to us, in alliance with the spirit and actings of Diotrephes, who received not the brethren himself and forbade those who would; "casting them out of the Church," with this aggravation that amongst us whole assemblies are thus cast out. (3 John 9, 10.)

Extract from "*A Letter relating to the recent Excommunication of Assemblies, and the ways of the Brethren in regard to Discipline, &c.*"—S. W. Spurr, 114, West-street, Sheffield.

See also "*Christian Obedience not Ecclesiastical Independency.*"—S. W. Spurr, Sheffield.

The following notes of a conversation between one of the "Exclusive Brethren" and an inquirer have been for some time in private circulation. They were partly made at the time, and carefully revised immediately afterwards with the assistance of some others who had been present. Though they do not report the conversation in full, they give the substance of it. Indeed, as far as we can see, it would be impossible, consistently with the principles upon which the "Exclusive Brethren" act, to give any other answers to these questions.

It has been stated that assemblies should be presumed to act in the power of the Holy Ghost.

Suppose an assembly err, what should then be done?—Still, while you acknowledge it as an assembly, you must accept its action as that of the Holy Ghost.

Then is it the Lord's mind that I should accept an error of judgment?—Yes.

Though the Lord shows me that the judgment was a wrong one?—Yes.

On what grounds?—Scripture saith "If a man hear not the Church let him be as a heathen."

Must every other assembly bow to that erroneous judgment?—Certainly.

Then under these circumstances does the Lord prefer an error of judgment to be propagated rather than the truth?—Yes.

Then is your principle one which assumes metropolitan infallibility?—Yes.

Then am I to accept what I know to be *an error, as the judgment of the Holy Ghost*? You admit that an assembly may arrive, and has arrived at an erroneous decision, which clearly could not have been the judgment of the Holy Ghost. Should I yet have been bound to accept that decision, else "I refuse to hear the Church" and despise the authority the Lord has appointed?—Yes.

Suppose one assembly comes to a decision which you see to be *wrong*, and another assembly comes to an opposite decision which you see to be *right*, which decision ought you to accept?—Decidedly the decision of the assembly which judged the question *first*.

Even though you knew it to be wrong and the other right?—Yes, because the other assembly should have abided by the decision of the first, and not have come to a separate judgment, thus denying the unity of the body.

Then would you rather adopt *an official blunder*, knowing it to be so, than act upon what you believed *the Lord had shown you to be the truth*?—Certainly.

Now suppose a young assembly, whose learning in the word cannot have been very matured (and there are numbers of such in this country now), were to arrive at an erroneous decision as to the admission or rejection of a brother, would you rather see the assembly where you worshipped adhere to the judgment which you knew to be erroneous and contrary to the mind of the Lord, than act on its own judgment in the case, after the first assembly had acted?—I should, because I am bound to accept the action as that of the Holy Ghost.

But have you never refused to accept the action of an assembly?—I have, but then I disowned the assembly.

First you say you are bound to accept the action of the assembly as that of the Holy Ghost, and therefore that you have no right to judge its action. Then you say that sometimes you have disowned whole assemblies. Now, I presume you did not disown them until you judged their action. Therefore you *must* have judged them first, and disowned them after. In short, you accept their action as long as you like it, but what you dislike, you judge and condemn.—I never judge except when I disown.

Yes, but I presume, in the order of logic and justice, you *judge first* and condemn after. Therefore you judge before you know whether you will condemn or not. In short, you judge, when you please; and when you don't, you call on us to accept. You assert then we should act as if assemblies were infallible, but you yourself have, you admit, not done so?

APPENDIX C.

We cannot bring this pamphlet to a close, without saying how deeply we deplore the spirit which has been manifested in the conduct of this controversy. We are astonished that those who have learned *so much of grace*, and written so much about it, should have exhibited *so little*. How sad that occasion should have been furnished for the application of such epithets as the following:—"inordinate virulence of spirit and language;" "unchristian bitterness;" "violence and acrimony most painful to a Christian mind;" "it went far behind the range allowed even by the world for the acerbity of controversy;" "they set out with boasting of their love; they have given the churches from which they came out specimens of rancour seldom equalled."*

We would remind those engaged in any way in controversy, and who are peculiarly in danger of falling into the sin of "*evil thoughts*" and "*evil speaking*," that these sins are by the blessed Lord Himself classed along with "*murders, adulteries, and thefts*."

There are three considerations which, we trust, if cherished, would lead to greater watchfulness against this sin.

(1.) "Evil speaking" and "blasphemy" are identical. They are only different translations of the same original word. In common parlance blasphemy is only used of evil speaking in reference to *the Lord*; but it is not so in Scripture. It is there used, in like manner, in reference to *men*. He who speaks evil of his brother wrongfully is *literally* and scripturally guilty of *blasphemy*. He who without a warrant attributes blasphemy to another, is himself a *blasphemer*.

(2.) Satan is "the accuser of the brethren," and from his so acting, he is called *διαβολος* (*diabolus*), "an accuser, a slanderer" (Parkhurst.) To falsely accuse the brethren is, therefore, to be an imitator of Satan, and to act in a "*diabolical*" manner. False accusation is *literally and scripturally* "*diabolical*."

(3.) He who sins against his brother, sins against Christ. "Why persecutest thou *me*?" "Forasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these *my brethren*, ye did it not unto *me*."

Brethren, is there not a fearful amount of these sins to be confessed? God is "no respecter of persons." May He give the spirit of grace and confession wherever it is needed.

We may add, also, that the term "*heretic*" is commonly applied in a different sense from that in which it is used in Scripture. It is commonly applied to one who holds *fundamental error*. In the language of Scripture, in accordance with the etymology of the word, it is applied to one *who makes a sect*. Parkhurst defines the word—"A founder, leader, or promoter of a religious faction or sect among Christians—a man factious in Christianity." Thus Calvin observes that "Paul does not apply it to those who cherish and maintain some certain error, or some corrupt dogma"—but that "under this name he comprehends all *ambitious, refractory, and contentious persons, who, impelled by wilfulness, disturb the peace of the Church, and excite discords*. In fine, *whoever, through his own forwardness, disturbs the unity of the Church, is designated a heretic by Paul*."

If this interpretation of Scripture be correct, the conviction is forced upon us that he who, without a divine warrant, caused the division in the Bethesda case, is guilty of the sin of *heresy*, and is subject to the rebuke of Titus iii., 10; and, if faithfulness to Christ were carried out, he would be brought under the prescribed discipline.

APPENDIX D.

The following extracts are statements of Mr. Darby's views. They have long been before the public; they are still unretracted. Mr. D. refuses, notwithstanding the most urgent entreaty from his own friends and fellow-labourers, to withdraw them. He calls them "the truth," and says of them and similar ones, "I see nothing at all to retract in the statements themselves:"—

"They take advantage of God's hand upon the sorrowing one to add to his burden and grief. *This is not atonement*, but there is sorrow and *smiting from God*—hence we find the *sense of sins* (verse 5). Though of course in the case of Christ they were not His own personally but the nation's (in a certain sense we may say ours, but specially the nation's sin). *But we have the clear proof that they are not atoning sufferings*, because instead of suffering in the place of others so that they should not have one drop of that cup of wrath to drink, others are associated with the Lord here in them. 'They persecute Him whom thou hast smitten, and speak to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded.' When men are wounded too, when Christ is the companion with them—not a substitute for them—then atonement is not wrought, nor the wrath of condemnation endured. *Yet God has smitten and wounded*. It is not merely man that has caused suffering," &c.—"The sufferings of Christ," p. 36. London: Morrish.

Again, on Ps. cii., Mr. Darby writes:—

"The time is the immediate approach of the cross, but was, we know, perhaps often anticipated in thought, as John xii. He looks to Jehovah who cast down Him whom He had called to the place of Messiah, but who now meets *indignation and wrath*. We are far, here, beyond looking at sufferings as coming from man. They did, and were felt, but men are not before Him in judgment; *nor is it His expiatory work, though that which wrought it is here—the indignation and wrath.*"—"Synopsis of the Books of the Bible," vol. ii., p. 219. London: Morrish.

Again Mr. D. says:—

"In the sufferings of Christ about our sin, He was entirely alone. But there is another kind of suffering which Christ went through, of which we cannot say that we suffer with Him, but in which He can sympathize with us, and that is in the close of His life. The special character of that, though not exclusive, was the suffering of the Jewish remnant in the last days. They are under law, *they do not know what it is to be reconciled to God*; but they come into the most awful conflict with Satan, Anti-christ, and all the terrors of that day. They will be under the sufferings which come from the *full letting loose of the power of Satan upon them without the knowledge of God's favour resting upon them*. That is anything but suffering with Christ; but still they will have the sympathy of Christ. *Christ has gone through that too*. When things were entirely changed in His whole position (*not yet as drinking the cup from God*); but when He comes and has Satan's power let loose upon Him (and there He can look forward to wrath). He was going through all that darkness which the power of Satan could bring upon Him, with the wrath of God staring Him in the face."—"The Word of God and the Priesthood of Christ," p. 7.

"Nor was this *merely sympathetic feeling*. Because though government and atonement for sin are two distinct things, yet that *government and the wrath borne in atonement would coalesce necessarily if atonement were not already made, for what can finally the government of God as to a sinner and his sins be?* But till Christ had wrought the atonement, this separation between wrath and government remained, as to the work that wrought it, *unaccomplished*. What makes the sorrow only discipline for the remnant, when they are not yet brought into the sense of divine favour, was before him, *there really* (though this be not all the truth on this point, as we shall see), *as the wrath and the hand of God in wrath.*—*What they dread vaguely, as not yet set free, He underwent in the highest and fullest sense.*"—"Sufferings of Christ," p. 66.

"He must really enter into the circumstances of man's condition. . . . He could not take the place of Adam in the midst of that which would have sustained his soul; it is *the place rather of Cain, the place of estrangement from God*, in the absence of all sustaining power from without"—"Words of Truth," Vol. III, p. 360.

"He was to identify himself *entirely* with the condition of His people," p. 357.

"Jesus had the thorough and full sense upon his soul, of the condition in which man was in separation from God because of sin. *There was all the weight of man's positive actual separation from God on his soul, these forty days, in the wilderness, just as, afterwards, the weight of wrath upon the Cross.*" This arose, Mr. Darby says, from his taking "*the place of the real circumstances of the condition in which man is.*"—"Words of Truth," Vol. III., p. 361.

On the views set forth by Mr. Darby, Mr. W. H. D. observes :—

"Those whose doctrines I am contending against, have intentionally and of set purpose separated his sufferings from his death. They do more. They so divorce them as to give the separate function of atonement to his sufferings, and deny it to his death. This is not only the case with the '*Present Testimony*' and the '*Bible Treasury*;' but in terms it is done by Mr. D. also, as the originator of the doctrine. He says, 'Atonement is wrought in the forsaking of God, when Christ was made sin for us.' Which Scripture denies, and says, 'the wages of sin is death.' And to make more certain what his meaning is, he says—taking the other side—'When the Lord spoke of smiting, quoting from Zechariah, no doubt it was in death, or unto death, he was smitten—but he is not speaking of atonement?'—*Solemn Appeal to the Brethren in London and Elsewhere, regarding the Error that is asserted among them of the Unatoning Death of Christ.* By W. H. D. London: Houlston and Wright. Price 6d.

Yet, in contending against Mr. Newton, twenty years ago, Mr. D. wrote :—"We may do well to consider what the New Testament does say as to the sufferings of Christ. . . . Surely a doctrine of such immense importance as the subjection of Christ to the wrath of God previous to the cross . . . a doctrine, I say, of such importance as Christ's being under wrath, would be found in the Epistles, by way of comment on the history. But not a word of any such doctrine is found, but quite the contrary. Sufferings in righteousness, from the contradiction of sinners, are, indeed, spoken of, and bearing sin also, but so as to exclude the thought of any other kind." Observations by J. N. D., 1847 :—

"Mr. Darby has thus passed beforehand a verdict of condemnation on his own doctrine" of a "third class of sufferings," which are not atoning.

In the same tract he speaks of "the pure unmingled heresy of wrath on Christ, which was not vicarious;" so that by his own pen he is convicted, not only of inconsistency, but of teaching "pure unmingled heresy!"

It is beside the purpose of this tract to enter into any examination of doctrine; but if Mr. Darby's teachings are unsound, and unsound on the very point to maintain the truth as to which "exclusive discipline" was invented, it is to the purpose to make known the fact. On these extracts we offer no remarks of our own, but leave the reader to judge for himself, giving him the deliberate opinions of those who, after having long and carefully examined Mr. D.'s writings, have been driven to the painful alternative of separating from him, and from the "Exclusive Brethren," because what they deem heresy is taught and upheld in their midst.

The following brief extracts are taken from a pamphlet entitled, "The close of Twenty-eight Years of Association with J. N. D. By W. H. D. London: Houlston and Wright. Price 1s." This pamphlet commences with letters written by Mr. D. last year, beseeching him to reconsider his printed statements on the sufferings and relationships of Christ. In them Mr. D. says :—

"You have certainly stated, that 'Christ was under wrath from God,' and 'smitten of God, not atoningly'" (p. 9). "You have put the Son of God 'under wrath and indignation,' and 'smiting from God,' and confession of sins, too, not in atonement, not vicariously, not as a substitute, but, I must say, personally, albeit it was what you call 'governmental wrath.' Still it was wrath that the Son of God was under, and a wrath that, but for atonement, would have coalesced in final wrath" (p. 12). "You put our blessed Lord in an imperfect relationship to God" (p. 15). "To me this dissection and mutilation of the Cross is what my whole spiritual nature shrinks back from, as alike contrary to Scripture, and fatal to the reverence which becomes the soul in contemplating this profoundest mystery of Divine, redeeming love" (p. 53). "It has come to this at last, that the poison of Mr. N.'s doctrines, which through the strenuous opposition of Mr. Harris first, and of Mr. D. and other brethren afterwards, was arrested, is now through Mr. D.'s writings being re-introduced; and the mischief which then went out like a river is now coming in like a tide" (p. 57). "I make no farther comment on the profanity of these abhorred speculations, where every heart should wonder and adore. But I ask any Christian person to consider what is involved

in this pretended accuracy and refinement in dealing with the cross. First, atonement is not simply by the cross—though it is always used by the New Testament writers as the very symbol of atonement. It is wrought only by three hours of specific suffering upon the cross. Next, it was accomplished without *Christ's death*;—communion, as it is said, having been restored before Christ dismissed his spirit, which was suspended during the period of his bearing wrath. Next, we have atonement without blood-shedding, [but 'without the shedding of blood is no remission'] for Christ's blood was not shed until after his death, and from his pierced side 'forthwith came thereout blood and water.' Let the brethren see to it in what these fatal speculations, so glibly and flippantly uttered, as I have heard them, will assuredly land them!" (p. 41.)

The following extracts from writers of Mr. Darby's party prove that, as usual, the disciples have gone beyond their master, and developed the embryo of false doctrine into glaringly unsound teachings:—

"The smiting of the shepherd expresses his utter humiliation as Messiah, *cut off* and having nothing. 'I will smite,' &c., refers to God's giving the Lord up to feel the reality of his rejection and death. No doubt atonement was therein wrought out. Smiting is a more general term; and though Christ takes it from God, it was literally his enemies that did the deed. . . . Smiting was the loss, so to speak; atonement was the gain of all. *Now that which was properly expiation or atonement was not the pure, however precious, act of Christ's death.* Of course death was necessary for this as for other objects in the counsels of God; but it is what Jesus went through from and with God, when made sin, it was *what he suffered for our sins*, not only in body *but in soul*, under divine wrath, that the atonement *depends on*. Many beside Jesus have been crucified, but atonement was in no way wrought there. Many have suffered horrors of torment for the truth's sake in life up to death, but they would have been the first to abhor the falsehood that *their sufferings atoned for themselves any more than for others.*"—*Bible Treasury*, Sept., 1866, p. 137.

"There was, too, to him, in addition to the pain of death, the *legal curse* appended, by God's righteous judgment as King of Israel, to the form of the death, as it is written, 'Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.' But this *curse of the law* was not the same thing as the wrath, when he cried out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' *The thieves bore it as he did.* . . . But the cross had been endured by many an unrepentant rebel against man and God; and the cross in itself would not take away sin. Yea, more, while the time in which he endured the cross was the period in part of which the wrath came on him (when he endured the wrath of God's judgment against sin) he only of the three that were crucified together could or did bear that wrath; and the agony of that wrath, if his alone of the three then and there crucified, was distinct from, though present to him at the same time as the agonies (infinitely lesser) of the cross of wood."—*The Present Testimony*, Part lxx., p. 167.

On these and similar passages Mr. W. H. D., in an appendix to the pamphlet above quoted, and in a more recent "*Solemn Appeal to the Brethren*," says:—

"I don't know that my feelings ever received so severe a shock by reading any writings on Christianity, whether by friend or foe, as they have done by the perusal of a paper on Ps. xxii., in the publication alluded to ("*Present Testimony*" for August, 1866. Morrish, London). "It is a laboured attempt to reproduce some of the most obnoxious features" of Mr. D.'s doctrine, "and conducted in such a way as to outrage every instance of the use made of 'the cross' by the inspired writers in the New Testament."—"The Close," &c., p. 63.

"Very *shame* forbids my commenting on such expressions. . . . I hang down my head in utter 'confusion of face.' . . . The tendency of this teaching . . . is to make the cross of Christ of none effect" (p. 67).

"The mere transcribing" of "these extraordinary passages produces a pain and grief it is hard to express."—"Solemn Appeal," p. 5.

"By this subtilising process, so contrary to the simple appeal which Scripture makes to our faith, a haze is thrown over the mind, under the cover of which admissions are demanded, and perhaps made, which in the end will be found to be destructive of the true character of the cross and death of our Lord Jesus Christ" (p. 7).

"I turn now to notice the force of the statements themselves:—

- "1. Atonement is not by the cross of Christ.
- "2. Atonement is not by Christ's enduring the curse of the law.
- "3. Atonement is not in Christ being smitten by God on the cross.
- "4. Atonement is not simply by Christ's death. . . . It is not that atonement is absolutely denied by them, but it is denied to be where God has declared it to be. . . . Christ's unatoning death is certainly taught" (p. 10).

"We are fairly at issue. I assert that the whole of Scripture which speaks of Christ's death and cross and smiting, and bearing the curse and atonement, is in direct contrariety to this doctrine. . . . These expositors of Mr. Darby's doctrine have landed us in the direct and undisguised heresy of the *unatoning death of Christ*. In whatever aspect that death is viewed, it is declared that there is *not atonement in it*. Wherever else atonement may be, it is asserted that it is not in Christ's death" (p. 11).

"Certainly, I never met with anything in the range of Mr. N.'s writings half so subversive of the cross of Christ as that which is before you now. . . . Other errors might be corrected; this is absolutely fatal." These are "speculations of men whose words will eat as doth a canker, and which, together with the destruction of the true doctrine of the cross, would render doubtful every other truth of Scripture, by rendering doubtful the authority on which it rests. . . . A teaching about Christ's sufferings and death which has not the sanction of the testimony of the Apostles" (p. 13).

"The question before us is, whether Scripture does or does not present the *death* of Christ as accomplishing atonement; for it is *this*, as I have shown, that is argumentatively and in terms denied" (p. 17).

"They so divorce" Christ's sufferings from his death "as to give the separate function of atonement to his sufferings, and deny it to his death" (p. 24).

"Never, I think, in the records of religious controversy was there advanced so utterly unscriptural a theory as this is in all its parts" (p. 27).

The question is "nothing less than whether the truth of the atonement, and the sufferings and the death of Christ, is to be retained as presented by the Apostles, or whether, rejecting this, it is to be remodelled after the conception of men guided by their speculations on the Prophets and Psalms" (p. 30).

The unscriptural character of these views has also been exposed in several other pamphlets, to which the reader is referred, viz.:—"Grief upon Grief." By P. F. H. Price 6d. "*Divers and Strange Doctrines*." By Tertius. Price 4d. "*Translation of a Letter from M. Guinand, of Lausanne, to Mr. J. N. Darby*." Price 3d. All are published by Houlston and Wright, Paternoster-row, London.