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“JUDGE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT.”

No. 1.

IN consequence of some mis-statements respecting Mr. B. W. Newton, which have recently appeared in *The Rainbow* and *The Freeman*, the following letters were addressed to the Editors of those periodicals, and have been kindly published by them.

They are now printed separately, in accordance with the request of several friends, and in the hope that they may be useful in leading to right conclusions many who have been misled by the false charges, which have been made by the “Brethren” during the last twenty years, and are reiterated in several pamphlets recently published.

From these pamphlets, various religious periodicals have been unwittingly led to speak of Mr. Newton as the leader of one section of the “Brethren,” and as holding heretical doctrines, which he altogether repudiates.

From The Rainbow, 1 January, 1867.

“As a matter of simple justice, we call special attention to the following letters, and we thank Mr. Cox for the promptitude and earnestness with which he vindicates an able and excellent man, who, it appears, needs no vindication. If there has been, misrepresentation, it rests not with us. The writer of the article on Brethrenism is morally incapable of doing injustice to any of his fellow men. He derived his information respecting Mr. Newton’s views upon this subject altogether from the recently published pamphlets concerning the alleged similarity of opinion between Mr. Newton and Mr. Darby. If those pamphlets have misled him, their writers must



bear the blame. Of course it never once occurred either to him or to the editor of this journal as possible that they were either *capable of, or could have any object in misrepresenting* Mr. Newton. Seeing, however, that the matter has shaped itself thus, we are glad that the article appeared, for nothing gives us greater pleasure than the establishment of Truth. It will be observed that No. 1 of the following letters is addressed to the editor of this journal, and No. 2 to the author of the pamphlet entitled 'The Close of Twenty-eight Years' Association with J. N. D.'"

No. I.

DEAR SIR,—In the article upon "Brethrenism" in *The Rainbow* for this month, it is stated, in reference to the views of Mr. Newton and Mr. Darby concerning the sufferings of Christ, that "they, at all events, admittedly and unquestionably, *both* regard, a class of sufferings as having befallen Him altogether distinct from those which, vicariously as our substitute, and as an atonement for our sin, Scripture so expressly states Him to have endured."

So far as it relates to the views of Mr. Newton there is not a word of truth in this assertion. The writer of the article has evidently taken for granted the false statements contained in the pamphlets to which he refers. He cannot have read Mr. Newton's works, or he would not have thus misrepresented his views. He cannot produce one passage from Mr. Newton's voluminous writings in which he has taught the doctrine attributed to him in the extract above quoted. Mr. Newton has *always* definitely maintained that all the sufferings of Christ in life and in death were sacrificial and exclusively on behalf of others, and that not one sorrow or suffering came upon Him except as the Redeemer. He has always held that Christ suffered *vicariously, in the sense in which that word is ordinarily understood among Christians*; but twenty years ago he thought it better to apply the word "vicarious," in the strict and specific sense of "instead of," only to the sufferings of Christ on the cross. For many years he has ceased to make even this distinction, and in his tract entitled "Christ our Suffering Surety," 1858, he has stated his reasons for not continuing to do so.

I feel sure that your sense of honour and justice will lead you to do all in your power to remove the false impressions concerning Mr. Newton's views which will doubtless be produced in the minds of many of your readers by the article in question.

Mr. Newton has not been for the past eighteen years connected with the "brethren," and he never held the *novel* views and doctrines which they distinctively teach.

The accompanying letter, which I have addressed to the author of the first pamphlet referred to in the article, will show how unfairly Mr. Newton has been treated; and should you require any further information or evidence as to the untruthfulness of the charges, I shall be glad to supply you with anything that would in any way tend to the vindication of my beloved and much esteemed friend and pastor.

Yours, very truly,

JOHN COX, jun.

58, Palace Gardens Terrace, Kensington,
1 December, 1866.

No. II.

To the Author of "The Close of Twenty-eight Years' Association with J. N. D.," &c.

DEAR SIR,—I have just read the pamphlet you have recently published relating to your separation from Mr. Darby, and have been so deeply pained by the reference you have therein made to Mr. Newton, that I cannot forbear to point out the great injustice you have done to that gentleman.

I should not thus trespass upon your time were it not for the impression your pamphlet has given me that you are desirous of maintaining truth, with a sincere and honest heart, and of opposing error at any cost.

In commenting upon your treatment of Mr. Newton, I would say at the outset that I do not consider that you have *intentionally* acted unfairly towards him but I believe that you have implicitly relied upon the false statements of others, as many more have done, without having fully and fairly investigated the charges for yourself. Your pamphlet is evidently written upon the assumption that Mr. Newton is a convicted heretic. You say that "his system was a repetition of what was exhibited in Irvingism;" and you speak of the poison of his doctrines having

been arrested by "the strenuous opposition of Mr. Harris first, and of Mr. D., and other brethren afterwards." It also appears from your pamphlet that in association with Mr. Darby you have been for the past eighteen years specially engaged in persistent testimony against Mr. Newton and his writings, and that great pains have been taken to enforce a discipline which excluded from your fellowship and communion "Christians in other respects upright and blameless, not because they hold Mr. Newton's doctrine, or have the least leaning towards it, but because they cannot abjure all association with those who at some time or other have received into fellowship persons, who in some way or other, have been connected with Mr. Newton's doctrine."

With reference to this long and cruel service, you say, "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 now, at last, you have discovered that your leader, whose withering decrees you have been zealously engaged for so many years in carrying out, has taught in writings which you have approved, doctrines which closely approximate, if they be not substantially the same, as those against which you so loudly protest. Thus with one hand you have condemned that which with the other you have recommended.

You explain this inconsistency by saying that, until recently, you had been reading Mr. Darby's "papers on the Sufferings of Christ under a perfect illusion of mind," and that there "reigned in your mind a kind of absolute confidence that it was next to impossible that he should really *hold* anything that was wrong." This kind of confidence together with the "fascinations of Mr. D.'s intellect and character and service in the Gospel," has I believe, led you and many more to accept the conclusions he had arrived at respecting Mr. Newton's doctrines, concerning which you observe, "Mr. D. has long ago settled for himself, and for others, I imagine, what character he thinks attaches to *them*."

I am glad to know that some have been delivered from that potent spell, and hope that many more will be freed from a system which you have so forcibly described "as 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 . . . narrow and sectarian, and as hard also as the domination of man can desire it." I must truly congratulate you upon your deliverance from such a system, and if up to the present time you have taken for granted Mr. Darby's statements of Mr. Newton's views, I trust that you will now be led to reconsider the whole question, and have no doubt that, if you give Mr. Newton's writings an impartial and unprejudiced consideration, you will be led to the conclusion that you have been regarding them, also, under a perfect illusion of mind, and that they do not contain any of the heretical doctrines which have been so unjustly attributed to them.

I have carefully considered the charges which have been made by Mr. Darby and others against Mr. Newton, and have read all his writings most attentively, and the conclusion I have come to is, that a similar case of unjust accusation and cruel misrepresentation and perversion of an author's statements, is not to be found in the annals of controversy.

Mr. Newton has been accused for the past nineteen years of holding blasphemous and heretical doctrines, respecting the person and work of the Lord Jesus.

The evidence usually adduced in support of these grievous charges is an article written by him in 1835, defending Christ's spotless humanity against Irvingism, and two tracts which he published in 1847. From these tracts speciously selected extracts, isolated from their connection, have been made, and are generally presented by his accusers in such a way as to give a semblance of truth to the charges grounded upon them. But the heretical doctrines attributed to these tracts were never held by Mr. Newton—they are full of statements directly opposed thereto.

I would willingly enter fully into what I believe to be most convincing proof of the correctness of this view, but for one circumstance,—namely, that the article and the two tracts have been for nineteen years removed from the field of controversy, having been definitely and publicly withdrawn by Mr. Newton in 1847; so that, even if they contained every conceivable error, they would not now be admissible as evidence against him, having been withdrawn from circulation and never re-issued. The only evidence

that can be fairly used to prove what his views and doctrines are, is contained in his writings now in circulation; but his accusers do not refer to these works; they most unjustly ground their accusations upon writings which have been withdrawn and are out of print, and consequently are not obtainable by those who would desire to test the truth of the charges.

Surely, if for the past eighteen years hundreds of persons have been perseveringly engaged "in revolting Christian minds generally from him," and "getting the brand mark of heresy attached to his doctrine, and obloquy to his name," they ought to be able to show from his writings and teaching during that period some ground for their cruel accusations and withering work.

The main object of your pamphlet appears to be to show that Mr. Darby's views are "substantially the same" although not quite so heterodox, as those attributed to Mr. Newton. In comparing their views you state, on page 39, that the doctrine of Mr. Newton is, that Christ "came under wrath, and that not vicariously, by virtue of His connection with Israel," and in the previous page you have referred, in support of this view, to the tract entitled "Observations, &c., 1847," which is the only reference you have made in your pamphlet to his writings.

You do not, however, state that the tract was withdrawn in 1847, nor do you refer to his tracts subsequently published, entitled "Ancient Truths respecting the Deity and True Humanity of the Lord Jesus," 1857, and "Christ our Suffering Surety," 1858, which take the place of the withdrawn tracts. Neither do you refer to the strict and specific sense in which he used the word "vicarious," as carefully explained in the tract from which you have quoted. (See p. 45.) And, further, you have taken no notice of the fact that in "Christ our Suffering Surety," Mr. Newton has again considered the application of the term "vicarious" to the sufferings of Christ, and given his reasons for no longer using it in the restricted sense. (See pp. 31, 32.)

Mr. Newton never held that Christ "came under wrath, and that not *vicariously*," &c., in the ordinary sense in which that word is understood among Christians; on the contrary, he clearly maintained in the withdrawn tracts, that *all* the sufferings of Christ were sacrificial, and exclusively for and on behalf of others. And in his more recent

tracts to which I have referred, and in all his subsequent writings, he has maintained most strongly that *all* the sufferings of Christ were vicarious, and that not one stroke, not one sorrow or suffering, came upon Him except as the Redeemer, the Lamb, the Surety, and the Sin-bearer for others.

There are other points in which it appears to me that Mr. Newton's views have been misrepresented in your pamphlet, but these I will not refer to, as my desire is simply to obtain for his writings your careful consideration, being satisfied that if you will test by them the charges made against him, you will be convinced that his views on foundation truths are altogether opposed to those which have been attributed to him in your pamphlet. Instead of being substantially the same as those held by Mr. Darby, they are as strongly contrasted as light and darkness.

I have thus written in defence of one for whom I feel the deepest sympathy in his prolonged and bitter persecution. I am thankful to know that he has not seen your pamphlet, and has been spared the additional pain which he would experience were he to learn how his views are misrepresented in it, and also know of the disclosures it contains of the extensive organization by which so much prejudice is created and perpetuated in the minds of Christians against him and his writings.

I remain, dear sir,

Yours faithfully,

JOHN COX, jun.

24 October, 1866.

From THE FREEMAN, 11th January, 1867.

SIRS,—In a recent article in *The Freeman* on the "Plymouth Brethren," Mr. Newton is referred to as belonging to one section of that body, and he is charged with "anathematizing" the views of Mr. Darby, and evincing towards him "contempt and bitterness."

I am not surprised at your having been misled by the many false and unfounded statements which have been for many years widely circulated respecting Mr. Newton.

Truth and justice require that your readers should be informed that Mr. Newton has not been connected with the Brethren for nearly twenty years. He separated from them in 1847 in consequence of the introduction of the

novel views and doctrines which now peculiarly characterize them, but against which he has always maintained a clear and definite protest. Hence the persecution to which he has been since subjected.

The endurance he has exercised, and the absence of all bitterness and contempt even towards those from whom he has received the greatest provocation, may be gathered from the following testimony by the author of "A Retrospect of Events that have taken place amongst the Brethren," which is all the more valuable as coming from one who is not a personal friend of Mr. Newton's, and does not agree with him in his views on prophecy:—

"We gladly give our testimony to Mr. Newton's calm and dignified demeanour under the unusual trials that have come upon him. The provocations he has received have been exceeding great—the accusations unscrupulous and of the worst description, the insults unlimited; and all this has been going on for years, without pity or abatement—without the slightest recognition that he ever has been esteemed a Christian, a gentleman, and a friend—or one who for several years was highly esteemed amongst the Brethren. His opponents have forgotten all that he once was to themselves and to others—nay, they have almost ceased to remember that he is of the human species. And yet amidst all this indescribable violence, and these multiplied vexations and distresses, no angry word has ever escaped him, no tart reply or expression of irritation ever for a moment disturbed the unruffled placidity of his most courteous pamphlets. His enemies have, on several occasions, laid themselves open to severe thrusts, but he has withheld his arm, and when the sword had fallen from the hands of his antagonists, he has disregarded the advantage, and honourably sustained the lofty dignities of the gentleman and the philosopher. As we have rarely seen the like of the animosity of his enemies, so we have rarely seen the like of his personal possession and imperturbable serenity. In this respect he is a pattern to controversialists; and if the names of the Plymouth Brethren shall endure long enough to secure a page in history, then in this quarrel—which is, unhappily, the most prominent part of their existence—Mr. Newton's conduct, as seen in his writings, will form a striking and noble contrast with the vulgar warfare of his intemperate adversaries."

Yours faithfully,

JOHN COX, jun.

58, Palace Gardens Terrace,
Kensington.