

Plas Newydd,
79, Prince's Drive
Colwyn Bay

Beloved Brethren:

I have for some time been gravely concerned, along with very many others, at the increasing downward trend in both the teaching and the morality of the Exclusive Brethren. (I adopt the title used by themselves in appeals on behalf of brothers in Professional Institutions, made to the Government of this country, though, in America, the same sect is registered with the Government of the U.S.A. as Plymouth Brethren No. 4 for the purpose of securing exemption from Combatant Service). It has been my constant prayer to the Lord, that I might receive from Him, 'eye salve that I might see' and now I can say humbly and without pretension, that my eyes are fully open to the awful situation, that has now become established among this sect. It is with great sorrow of heart that after 50 years happy fellowship, I am compelled in loyalty to Christ to separate from iniquity as instructed in 2 Tim. chapter 2. My reasons for so doing as stated verbally to the brethren in Colwyn Bay, on the evening of January 19th, 1961, are as follows:

1. AUTHORITATIVE MINISTRY This lies at the root of all the false doctrine at present existing among the Exclusive Brethren. A ministry (or system of teaching or doctrine) which is regarded by its adherents as infallible, and must never under any circumstances be challenged, is simply 'Romanism' in disguise. I know of only two sects in Christendom which make such a shocking claim, the Roman Church and the Exclusive Brethren. No longer do we hear among these brethren 'What saith the Scriptures?' but rather 'Is it in the Ministry?' and if the two conflict, as they often do, it is always 'the Ministry' to which heed is given. When leaving the Elders at Miletus (in Acts 20) Paul committed them to God and the Word of His grace and from then to the end of the dispensation, there has never been any other safeguard or resource for the faithful heart. Forsaking the Word of God, and substituting the doctrines of men, has led to all the confusion in Christendom, and to all the confusion now rampant in the iniquitous sect of Exclusive Brethren, they have 'forsaken the Word and there is no light in them'. A further serious matter is that it is openly stated by their leaders, and accepted by their followers, that it is not at all necessary to follow the Scriptures, but must listen to the 'voice of the Spirit in the assembly.' Here we have a really dreadful doctrine, a clear suggestion that the Blessed Holy Spirit is now teaching what is contrary to the Word of God, which He Himself indited. I have warned the brethren publicly that this doctrine borders very closely on 'blasphemy against the Holy Spirit' for which there is no forgiveness; and yet this phrase, so shocking to every right spiritual sensibility, is one most commonly on the lips of many brethren. If anyone has the moral courage to call attention to these false doctrines, they are immediately marked down for 'excommunication'. as one who is 'not going on with the truth' (what is called the truth by these brethren is the system of false and unscriptural doctrine now taught among them.) The phrase referred to above contains another subtle error, that the Exclusive Brethren are 'the Assembly', but with that we will deal later.

2. PHARISAISM. Of all the sects existant among the Jews, when the Lord Jesus Christ was here on earth, none received more scathing denunciation than the Pharisees (or Holy Ones, as they called themselves). To them and to them alone, did He address that terrible denunciation, 'Generation of vipers, how shall ye escape the damnation of Hell? (Though blessed be His Name, many among them obeyed His word and were saved). The thoughtful believer cannot fail to see in the Exclusive Brethren, many evidences that they are the modern version of what Paul refers to as 'the strictest sect of the Pharisees'. I have already referred to one characteristic, that of 'making the Word of God' void, but in addition their present line of 'Authoritative Ministry' falsely so called, has for its end the making only of the outside of the plate clean, and every effort is being made to whiten the outside of the sepulchre, neglecting the dead men's bones inside. And what a mass of corruption there is inside, never in fifty years among them have I known such foulness. Young men and women, and older ones too, even some taking a prominent lead, have been found guilty of adultery, fornication, uncleanness, incest, drunkenness, falsehood, deceit and other such things. Yet the outward appearance of what is termed by them 'the testimony' must be maintained at all costs. Many earnest souls, are still held in a false position by the desire to preserve the outward unity of the position, many indeed who would wholeheartedly endorse everything in this letter. A great deal of trouble and sorrow has come in of late, by the false and totally unscriptural doctrine, that members of this iniquitous sect, must not eat with any outside their own membership, whether relatives, believers or unbelievers. This is also the spirit of the Pharisee, who gathers his holy garments around him and says 'Lord, I thank thee, I am not as other men'.

Widespread sorrow and misery have followed in the wake of this false doctrine, false as to the life and movements of the Lord Jesus and His disciples when here, in whose steps we are to follow, false as to the teaching and example of the Apostle Paul, of whom we are exhorted to be imitators as he was of Christ. Of those leaders who teach this doctrine it can truly be said, 'destruction and misery are in their ways and the way of peace they have not known'. At one Assembly Meeting (so called) it was stated openly in the presence of several hundred brethren, that 'we cannot follow the Lord, as He was unique, and could do what we cannot do', we cannot imitate Paul, he was an elect vessel, and so on. So now apparently it is wrong to follow the Lord (though scripture exhorts us to do so), we cannot imitate Paul (though again we are exhorted to do so), and we cannot accept the Word of God, what unutterably folly and sin is here, the satanic source of it all is clearly evident.

3. EXCOMMUNICATION Although there is only one case of excommunication in the New Testament, in 1 Cor. 5, and that of such an incestuous character that even the Gentiles would not mention such things. The whole system of Exclusive Brethren has run completely riot in this matter. All over the world Godly brethren who have served the Lord and His people faithfully for years, are hounded out of fellowship on the flimsiest pretexts. Some for having dared to call attention to unscriptural teaching in their so called 'Authoritative Ministry', others because parents have had a meal with their own children, who had been excommunicated also for totally inadequate reasons and so on. Once anyone is 'outside' the most extreme and untruthful statements are made about them. They are said to 'have left the assembly - left the fellowship of God's Son' - 'to be unfit for Christian fellowship anywhere; - they are 'dogs and liars' - 'swine rushing downhill to their own destruction'. They are 'in the outer darkness' - 'in the congregation of the dead' - 'associated with the table of demons'. The above and other phrases, have been used by their leaders in public meetings, in the presence of hundreds of brethren, and have never been challenged, so great is the reign of terror in this evil and iniquitous sect, nor have they been recanted in any way. All this displays the ignorance of their leaders. This kind of thing was well described by beloved J.N.D. as 'monstrous folly', and so it is. It is also noticeable that, as in all cases in Church History, where persecution has been rampant, it is the meek and Christlike who suffer and the vain, arrogant and brutal take the lead.

4. LAODICEAN PRESUMPTION. It has also become increasing obvious in the last year or two that the small and insignificant sect of Exclusive Brethren have come to regard themselves as 'the Assembly', this being abundantly evident in their 'Ministry' and also in phrases used in Prayer and Praise, such as 'we - the assembly' - 'the Lord is putting the finishing touches to the assembly in view of His speedy return' - 'There is an added glory in the assembly of late in view of the presentation' - 'The Lord will come on some Lord's Day morning when we are breaking bread', these and many other 'great high sounding words of vanity' are in common use among the Exclusives, clearly indication the Laodicean position into which they have fallen, a condition so nauseous to the Lord that He says 'I will spue thee out of my mouth'. With all their wonderful opinions of themselves they 'know not that they are poor and wretched and naked and blind'. It is good to know that there are many who have sought from the Lord Jesus 'eye salve that they may see' and with anointed eyes, have left this iniquitous system. They have come out of the house of bondage and from under the reign of terror and are finding joy, peace and happiness in the Lord. Many still going on with the evil system would fully endorse all that is set forth in this letter, but they are held by family ties, by fear of the isolation that in many cases has resulted, and other motives unworthy of them, and marking them as lacking in faith and loyalty to our Lord Jesus Christ.

5. INTOXICANTS. On this subject two things are quite clear. On the one hand the rightful use of Alcoholic Liquor is not forbidden in scripture (but let it be noted that Timothy was apparently a rigid abstainer, until he received a special word from the Apostle Paul) but very solemn warnings are given throughout scripture as to over-indulgence in Intoxicants. In spite of this the brethren are now told they ought to have Intoxicants on their tables to show that they have 'Christian liberty'. This false doctrine has already led to deplorable results. Young men and young women holding parties at which some have been completely intoxicated, with sorrowful moral results, activities that are commonly found amongst 'teenagers' in the world. Young men who have appeared before Tribunals as having a conscience against military service have not hesitated to get completely drunk and been rebuked by godly young men from other sects. The disastrous consequences of this new and monstrous doctrine is only just beginning to bear fruit. In their anxiety to sweep and garnish their houses by laws, rules and regulations, they are 'making room for seven devils worse than the first' and this is already becoming apparent.

6. Finally I must express my deep sorrow at having to separate from many beloved brothers and sisters with whom I have walked for many years. Nothing I have written has ever to my knowledge marked any in the Meeting in Colwyn Bay, but, alas, even they cannot escape their fellowship with meetings far and near, where many of these things are found, and in loyalty to my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, I must separate from the corrupt and iniquitous sect of Exclusive Brethren.

In view of the above it is impossible for me ever again to set foot in any room used by this sect. As they have now no jurisdiction over me, I cannot be seen by any coming officially from them, nor accept or recognize their care Meetings or Assembly Meetings as having any Scriptural validity or authority.

My house will always be open to any who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and who walk in obedience to the revealed mind of God in His Word. Such may ever be assured of a warm, affectionate and hospitable reception.

Your brother in Christ,

James Rainford.