

# A LETTER.



31st January, 1893.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I have received your letter dated 11th January. You misunderstood me, I fear, with regard to my reasons for leaving those Brethren called "Open." I certainly did speak of their principle of Independency, but I also spoke of positive evil doctrine known to me. Independency exists among them to an extent which would surprise any outsider. If evil exists in one meeting and is spoken of to another nigh at hand, the latter invariably disclaims all responsibility. I have also known new meetings started; and existing meetings not informed, even though several may be geographically very close, and no fellowship sought. The truth of the One Body is but little known, and I have known those who ventured to bring it forward spoken to very decidedly about it. But as to actual doctrinal evil, here are a few sorrowful facts—a few out of many I could name if necessary. Several years ago, the leading brother in the meeting at C—— T—— openly taught full-blown Newtonianism—that our Lord suffered the consequences of His people's sins all His life, harping much on the rendering by some of 1 Peter ii. 24, "He bare our sins . . . . to the tree." And to shew the source, he openly said at the breaking of bread on one occasion that if there was a man on earth he esteemed, it was Benjamin Wills Newton; and this said emphatically and in full, as here written. After some little resistance and protest, by word and pen, I withdrew from the meeting; but inconsistently enough attached myself to another company in inter-communion. Now this thing has never been judged, and that meeting exists now and is to be found in the O. B. meeting book to-day.

I also knew of a man teaching at K—— T—— non-eternity, but as he was the moneyed man of the meeting he was never dealt with, and several godly had to withdraw. This also was never judged and the meeting remains to-day (though the offender is deceased).

Also perhaps you have heard of L—— R——; I knew him personally and know him to be an unsound man,

holding the terrible delusion of the larger hope—Universalism. Some two or three years ago he bought an estate near S——; and upon presenting himself at the O.B. S—— meeting was refused because of his evil doctrine; but undaunted he went to the neighbouring village meeting at W—— and was there received with open arms.

I have also in my mind a leader among them who holds as a principle that doctrinal evil is not an assembly's responsibility; and who caused some years ago the complete break-up of a considerable meeting in North London through shielding a teacher of Annihilation. He did not himself hold the doctrine, but his principle caused him to act as I have said. I was but last week reliably informed that he now holds the thing himself, but the assembly in which he now is has taken no action.

A question was asked in *The Witness* (a standard paper among O.B.'s) December, 1890, something to this effect (I regret I cannot find the paper), "What scripture have we for dealing with false doctrine?" The Editor's reply was faithful, as far as I remember; but he added that he had received during the month letters from brethren in all parts of the country to the effect that we have no scripture at all; and that any adduced must be strained to be made to teach us so.

I regret to have to say from personal experience, that evil doctrine is viewed very lightly among them. I am not a heresy hunter, dear brother, but one cannot close the eye to facts; and I became convinced after several years of observation and exercise of heart, that it is not possible to hold fellowship with Open Brethren, even in their "good" meetings, without association with evil. I accordingly withdrew, God alone knowing what it cost me. I trust you may all be guided aright—the subject heart will assuredly be taught the Lord's way.

Affectionately yours in Christ Jesus,

W. W. F.

To ——— NEW YORK.