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A FEW FAITHFUL REMARKS,  
IN THE  
FORM OF A DIALOGUE,  
ON A TRACT ENTITLED,  
“A FAMILIAR CONVERSATION  
ABOUT THE  
PLYMOUTH BRETHREN.”

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A. Have you read the tract about “Brethren;” and if so, what do you think of it?

B. I have read it and would rather not say what my judgment is as to it. Let us rather examine its leading statements and allow it to speak for itself. Uprightness and truth do not need the aid of anything cunning, low, or personal. Sincerity and straightforwardness are generally easily discovered; while the contrary is sooner or later seen through and frequently recoils upon the heads of those who practise such unworthy methods.

A. Is there anything in the tract worthy of serious consideration? It seems to me to be only a tissue of silly reproaches and groundless insinuations.

B. You are quite right. It is merely a paltry, feeble, slanderous attack upon “Brethren” and from what I have heard in very many quarters this is the opinion formed of it, and indeed no sane man—not to say a Christian—could form any other; but still it may be well for the sake of truth and for the good of sincere, godly people to review its *extraordinary* contents.

A. I think you are right, especially as we shall have some important truths to unfold as we pass along. The writer of the tract (a Baptist Minister it seems) commences with giving “Brethren,” so-called, the title of a *sect* (but he forgets that all real Christians are brethren) and repeats the word *sect* several times and always, to give it emphasis, *in italics*, as if he wished particularly to make his readers believe that they are a sect; but have not “Brethren” openly in almost all their writings shown and *proved* that they are not



*B.* Assuredly "Brethren" both verbally and in many of their writings clearly disprove the idea of their being a sect. There is a tract expressly written on the subject entitled, "If God's children meet together *as such* do they then become a sect?" (London: G. Morrish.) In this tract, amongst many other reasons, the five following are given to prove that "Brethren" cannot fairly or truthfully be called a sect. "A sect," as we generally use the word has—

1. A humanly-ordained or appointed ministry.
2. A one-man ministry.
3. A fixed or stated salary for the minister.
4. Pew-rents or collections for the minister.
5. The unconverted taxed to uphold the system.

These five features, with many other such-like, undeniably constitute a sect. Now "Brethren" have none of these nor any other such-like things amongst them, but meet simply and solely as Christians, setting up no human plans or devices, and are therefore in all fairness not a sect.

*A.* I think you have very fully shown that there is no element amongst "Brethren" whereby they can be justly called a sect. The Baptist Minister's tract about the "Plymouth Brethren," as he calls them, states that a well-known person called almost daily on a Wesleyan, and after leaving various tracts with strange titles, pressed him very much to visit some place which he called "*the rooms*," and repeatedly called on his wife when he was from home, pressing her in like manner to go to "*the rooms*," but that these persons said they belonged to the Wesleyans and were on that account pressed the more to go.

*B.* This is all mere banter, fiction, and slander. There is not a Wesleyan in B—— who would or could endorse such a groundless, foolish conjecture. Assertions are not proofs. The cause that needs such supports as these must be in a very bad state. Wesleyan Christians as such have met with "Brethren" at the Lord's table again and again, entirely of their own mind, in this place; and one of them, a very godly man, who had been and remained amongst them fifty-two years, left a request with his wife before he died that an individual, whom he named, amongst "Brethren" might bury him. The wish was acceded to, I need not say. This has occurred within the last eight weeks, Christians, called Independents, too, entirely of their own free will have met with us here, and so also a

dear man who a few months ago departed this life, amongst the Primitive Wesleyans. "Facts are stubborn things," says the proverb, but mere fiction is a puny weapon wherewith to assail the "Brethren."

A. But is there any such place as "*the rooms*?"

B. Not at all. In this little circumstance, amongst many others, you see the puerile banter of the Baptist Minister. Brethren have purchased the old Independent chapel and fitted up the upper part or gallery into one large room, capable of seating 400 persons. This room has been named, in bills announcing the preaching of the gospel, posted all over the town, as "*the large meeting room*;" but our friend, the Baptist preacher, *must* make a Wesleyan designate it, "some place he called *the rooms*."

A. What is the cause of the Baptist Minister's anger and of this strange and mean mode of attack upon "Brethren?"

B. Have you not heard that some of his members, as he calls them, have within a few weeks left him and connected themselves simply as Christians with those Christians called "Brethren?" Anything like *leaving a minister* is terrible to such an one (speaking generally) and is sure to bring out a sad amount of anger, not to say baseless insinuations.

A. The next supposed evil about "Brethren" is that of some speaker, "whose grammar very much obscured what he wished to say." For myself I would rather hear the most simple, unlettered man preach man's ruin and God's remedy fully and distinctly, than the most learned person who only "got up" a discourse from other people's writings or books, containing very little truth and much error, a muddle or mixture of law and gospel, works and faith, grace and free agency. The apostles, with the exception of Paul, were not learned men. The Spirit of God has said, "*Perceiving that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.*" The capability of judging, both in the case of the supposed Wesleyan and that of the Baptist preacher, should be taken into account before the assertion could have any weight. But it is quite plain in this, as well as in that which has gone before, the whole thing is gratuitous assumption, insinuation, and imagination. But to me the *pretence* to learning and the copying of the clergy by ministers both in their attire, manners, and buildings is a



sad feature of the present day. Preachers want to appear learned when they ought to be humble and simple and declare the whole counsel of God in words easy to be understood. Paul came not to the vain philosophers at Corinth with excellency of speech, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. If "the members and the congregations could only see how the ministers make or "get up," as they themselves call it, their sermons, their eyes would be opened to the great deceit and hollowness of it all. A shell without a kernal is a poor, deceptive thing, which furnishes no food.

B. I can agree with you, A., in every word you have uttered. The evident aim of the Baptist preacher is ridicule; but the real Christians, even amongst what are called *his own* people, can see, and I doubt not have seen through all this, and the issue we may well leave with the Lord. I would rather be the ridiculed than the ridiculer of God's children any day. To "despise" or "offend" one of the most simple or "least" of God's children is a weighty offence before God. The Saviour himself has said, "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." I would rather hear John Bunyan, were he living, or Richard Weaver, as gospel preachers, from what one knows of the honesty, earnestness, power, and simplicity of the men than the most learned theologian in the world, if he only, as is too often the case, preached a spurious, mixed gospel, in which man, and not the Lord, was exalted.

A. The Wesleyan informant is made to say that some one came up to him after the service and told him "he might break bread the next Lord's day morning, if he felt so inclined." This again bears the evident mark of fiction and is unworthy of the least comment. Do you not think so?

B. I have not the least doubt of it. The writer about the "Plymouth Brethren" evidently sees not the happy privilege, and, I may add, the duty, of every real Christian to come together every Lord's Day and break bread. Did not all the Christians we read of in the Acts and the Epistles do so? "All that believed were together, and of the rest (the unbelievers) durst no man join himself unto them, and believers were the more added to the Lord." It was on the first day of the week, and *not* on the first

Sunday in the month, "when the disciples came together to break bread." But now all is changed by "the minister:" and when a few Christians come together simply as Christians, after the manner of those we read of in the New Testament, such are the fears and the morbid sensibility with which the Baptist Minister is seized, that he is up in arms against "Brethren," and says all manner of evil things against them, especially when a few of what he calls "his members" leave him, and connect themselves with those who meet only as Christians in the name of the Lord, having nothing whatever sectarian in their mode or manner of meeting. How sad to see men calling themselves preachers of the gospel so full of mere surmise and groundless conjecture! And thinking to do himself a great service, he puts all these, I may say, dreams and false alarms in print as so many facts, when the whole town knows that in sober truth they are all fictions. Real Christians are seeing more and more through all this; and it is not difficult to divine what the consequences are likely to be.

A. We next come to the question asked by one of the supposed informants of the Baptist Minister, as to the "age of the sect called 'Plymouth Brethren.'" "Are the 'Plymouth Brethren,'" he asks, "a very old sect?"

B. My answer shall be, that, while they are not in any sense or particular a sect, but simply Christians, meeting together as such, they are as old as the day of Pentecost. On that wondrous and most important day, the Holy Ghost descended from the raised, ascended, and glorified Saviour, and the result was the conversion of thousands there and then; and all those met together as Christians, and as Christians only, with neither human plans nor rules, nor one man set over them called a minister. And thus, and thus only, do "Brethren" now meet together. So that, as to their real commencement or age, it may be dated from the day that Christians from "every nation under heaven" met together, *because they were Christians*. You get the same one body called the "*unity of the Spirit*," all through the Acts and the Epistles. And hence the great force and importance of those words, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." "*There is ONE body*." (Eph. iv. 3, 4.) So true and so simple is this beautiful principle of unity, that we have an assembly or Church of believers spoken of in three diffe-

rent cottages or houses. But now, alas! different ministers make their own sects, and the members are *their* members, the deacons *their* deacons, the chapel, as far as the speaking part goes, is *their* chapel, the pulpit *their* pulpit, and the baptistry *their* baptistry, and the hearers are said to "*sit under the minister*"—so that, in all truth, he is set up as much as a priest in the Church of Rome. And mark, my dear friend, there is not a word in the New Testament to sanction a particle of all this.

A. It would be impossible to disprove what you say; but let us pass on to the next point. The Baptist Minister makes George, whom he employs, to tell all his foolish hypotheses—to say that, "about thirty years ago, 'Brethren' came first into existence at Geneva:" is this true?

B. The Baptist Minister, and our friends J. and G., have fallen into strange errors and mistakes, to use no stronger terms. "Brethren" did not "come into existence first at Geneva;" but about the same time both in England and in Ireland they commenced (literally speaking) first to meet together more than thirty years ago, and the simple and literal origin of what are called "Brethren" had its rise in the deep sense they had of the unscriptural existence of sects and human systems as such, and also the worldliness, errors, evils, pride, and show, that were going on in the several so-called churches to which they were attached. They saw and felt that the principle of a one-man ministry was wrong, and that ministers were frequently paying more regard to their own ease, and to a high position, and getting money, than to what they called "their flock." And these, with many other such like things, drove "Brethren" out of the various systems of men, and drew them together as believers in common in the Lord Jesus Christ, to one only centre and Saviour. The same causes are producing the same effects all around us. It is utterly impossible that Christians who will prayerfully study their Bibles, and keep their hearts, eyes, and ears open to the many unscriptural and unworthy things that are continually going on in their midst, can remain in the systems they are now linked with.

A. The question is asked by the Baptist Minister, friend John, whether the "Plymouth Brethren" are a numerous sect, and the answer is, No. And then the person called George talks about their "*artful* method of proselytism," and about quarrels in the *exercise of their*

*gifts*;" and goes on to say that "they are occasionally recruited from other churches in the way of disaffected, weak-minded, or *bribed* persons;" and adds that "though he is not in a position to verify the statement, it is said that there are at least twelve sisters amongst them to every brother." What say you to all this?

*B.* I need only say that it is all mere idle nonsense, or what is commonly called rubbish. The man who could imagine or put such paltry statements into the mouth of his two supposititious friends ought to find something better to do. One of themselves has said that "the life of a minister is either a literary or a lazy one." Hence the *brewing* that is constantly going on in their minds about persons taking their flocks from them. Having no way of support generally but what they derive from their office as ministers, they are as fearful as possible, and imagine that everything you are doing is done to take *their* "members" from them, and therefore lessen their pay. The man who could *imagine*, not to say write, print, and publish, the idea that "Brethren" *bribed* Christians to attend the Lord's Supper, shows plainly enough what state his mind and thoughts must be in, and how much he needs some real occupation, instead of the sedentary, brooding life he leads. I can only say that, from my heart, I pity such a man. The bantering of the Baptist Minister about the "gifts of the Spirit of God" is very lamentable. It would be a wise thing if the reader would prayerfully and attentively read Rom. xii., 1 Cor. xii. and xiv., and Eph. iv., and see for himself what God has said in those Scriptures about His own gifts to His own Church.

*A.* The next questions are about what the writer calls the "peculiar views," "church government," and the hire, pay, or "support of ministers." Does the Baptist Minister give a fair or truthful view of these points through his spokesman, George?

*B.* He says, "all our views are peculiar;" but we have no views but what are plainly written in the word of God. The writer raises the question of church government, but his friend, George, gives no answer. The church government of the New Testament is "Brethren's" only government; and as to paying a minister by collections, pews, or by a weekly offering system, if the Baptist Minister will show us any one of these anywhere in the New Testament, we shall adopt his plan forthwith; but

these trade-like ways are not found in the word of God. If, again, he can show us, from Matthew to Revelation, one person in one assembly answering in any way to a modern minister, or any one thing of his mode of "preparing," "calling," "voting," or "ordaining a minister," we shall adopt the system at once; but none of these things are to be found in the Scriptures. His one-man ministry, therefore, is wrong; his church government wrong; his mode of paying the minister wrong; and all attaching to the making, fitting, or appointing of a minister is wrong; for, I repeat it, there is not a particle or shred of his mode of procedure in these matters in the Scriptures of truth. No wonder, therefore, that he is so angry with us because we have laid bare these, to him, unwelcome facts; and he finds, moreover, that some of the most thoughtful and spiritual of "his members" are acting on them. To such a man everything depends on his being able to hold his position as a minister, and therefore his bitterness against "Brethren," because they have been the means of proving how wrong his unscriptural office and position are.

A. But the Baptist Minister says, that in this place, amongst "Brethren," the ministry is conducted on what we call the "one-man system." Is this the case?

B. As in everything else so in this—he has made, I shall only say, a mistake; and allow me here to remark, that as yet in this tract "on the Plymouth Brethren," I have found nothing but errors and mistakes. A single word of truth has not yet appeared in it. There are here, and in three of the villages, between 70 and 80 Christians gathered together in the Lord's name, and we have, I am thankful to say, seven persons amongst us who publicly "preach and teach the Lord Jesus Christ," and many others who engage in prayer, give out a hymn, or read a portion of God's word. This is a sufficient answer to our friend the Baptist Minister's statement; but the one-man system and the hire or pay being two very sore places in his system, we cannot be surprised that he feels much hurt on these points; the truth, however, must be maintained.

A. The question is asked, if "HE" is not supported; and the answer returned, by the person called George, is, "I cannot say." Do you think the Baptist Minister does not know, or "cannot say?"

B. Yes, he knows very well, and "could say," if he wished to say it, that not one of those in this place who

labour for the Lord, receives either directly or indirectly any remuneration for his work. In a small town like this, people know perfectly well how their neighbours live, and what they are doing, and how they get what is called their living; but our friend, the minister, likes a little banter, and I suppose we must indulge him in his fancies; but baseless insinuations, which he must know have no foundation whatever, are not very commendable things in the mouth of a so-called minister. Give me an open, honest, opponent, and I know what to do and to say; but a man who moves only in the dark, and throws out mere insinuations and sneers, it is difficult to reply to or handle. Christians, however, can see through all this, and to their impartial judgment we shall leave the petty surmises and inuendoes of the writer of the tract.

A. George is made to say, that "some of the learned writers amongst 'Brethren' have been foolish enough to contend, with charming simplicity, that an evangelist is a person who travels about, (*εὐαγγελιστής*) is simply one who delivers a good message." What do you think of such bold and unblushing statements as these?

B. You may well call them bold and unblushing statements. *Εὐαγγελιστής* is used both in the singular and plural in our translation, and means a messenger or messengers, a herald or heralds, a proclaimer or proclaimers of good news, or the gospel; and not merely as the Baptist Minister states, "*εὐαγγελιστής* is simply one who delivers a good message," because he wants to make the meaning he gives the Greek word fit in with his stationary position over one society or church, as he calls it. Do we find any of the messengers, heralds, or proclaimers of the gospel named in the New Testament, told to stay in one place, as the Baptist Minister is obliged to do? Not one. Look at the first messengers of the gospel, and what is the Saviour's commission to them: "*Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.*" What did the Apostle Paul do afterwards? He *went everywhere preaching* the Lord Jesus. What do we find Philip the evangelist's course to be, and, in fact, the whole Church scattered consequent on the great persecution at Jerusalem, "*they went everywhere preaching the word.*" There is not a single instance in all the New Testament, where an evangelist was told to stay in one assembly, city, town, or neighbourhood. Suppose the Queen were to send a mes-

senger with good news to this kingdom, and to her various colonies, what would be thought of that messenger if he said, "No, I shall settle down in one town or neighbourhood, and in the midst of a flock that I shall gather round myself, and always stay and proclaim the news there." This conduct would be nothing less than disobedience and rebellion. And suppose that man were to quote a word which few persons were acquainted with, and give it a meaning to suit his disobedient course, would he not be adding evil to evil? To me, to deny that an evangelist is a person who travels about, and ridicule those who say he does; and then quote a Greek word, and give it a wrong rendering to suit an unscriptural position or office, is a melancholy thing. The Baptist Minister may handle "Brethren" as wrongly as he pleases, but to "handle the word of God deceitfully" (2 Cor. iv. 2) is very awful. In the New Testament sense of the word evangelist, I would call such men as Messrs. Radcliffe, Smith, Guinness, and Weaver, (in their measure,) evangelists; they go about without money and without price, preaching the gospel. I do not say for a moment, that an evangelist might not be in a certain town or place for a considerable time; this might be and doubtless often was the case, but never is it stated that such an one had a settled position over an assembly of people in one town or city. Travelling about was their proper work, and the Greek word implies this.

A. It seems very plain that the Baptist Minister counted largely either on the simplicity, credulity, or ignorance of his readers when he asks the following question: "But how do they (the 'Brethren') destroy the whole scriptural argument for the support of the ministry? 1 Tim. v. 17, 'Let the presbyters that rule well be counted worthy of double honour,' (*διπλης τιμης*) *the most liberal support*, 'especially those who labour in the word and doctrine. For it is written,' &c. 2 Tim. ii. 3, 6; 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14.

B. Yes, indeed, he speaks of the charming simplicity of "Brethren," but had he been a little more simple and humble, and a little less subtle, *wise*, and *clever*, he would not perhaps have fallen into the many mistakes, errors, and misstatements with which his tract abounds. His rendering of the Greek, with everything else, is at fault; he quotes the Greek words *διπλης τιμης*, and says, in italics, these Greek words mean, "*the most liberal support.*" The

apostle speaks of "corrupting," or (margin) "dealing deceitfully," with the word of God; and when I give my reader the connexion and translation of these two Greek words as they occur in the Scriptures, I think he will agree with me, that the man who interprets them as meaning "*the most liberal support*," is "corrupting" or "dealing deceitfully" with the word of God. The first word διπλῆς, διπλοῦς, or διπλόω, "double," occurs only five times in the New Testament. First, Matt. xxiii. 15, "Twofold more the child of hell." Second, 1 Tim. v. 17, "Be counted worthy of *double* honour." Third, fourth, and fifth, Rev. xviii. 6, "Double unto her *double* . . which she hath filled fill to her *double*," and "*double* unto her double according to." Here you have the whole of the cases where the word double, or διπλῆς, to use the writer's word, occurs, with its connexion; and where have we, in any one of them, the least reference to "*the most liberal support*" of a so-called minister? Let us now look at the word τιμῆς. This word occurs 43 times in the New Testament, and in not one of its various connexions has it any reference to the support of what is called a minister. Out of the 43 introductions of the word in our translation, we have four in the First Epistle to Timothy. First, 1 Tim. i. 17, "Be *honour* and glory for ever and ever." Second, 1 Tim. v. 17, "Be counted worthy of *double honour*." Third, 1 Tim. vi. 1, "Their own masters worthy of all *honour*;" and fourth, 1 Tim. vi. 16, "To whom be *honour* and power." Will any unprejudiced man say, that any one of these passages rendered "*honour*," means the pay, support, or hire, of what is called the ministry? Surely not. In the other 39 cases, there is not the remotest reference to the support, pay, or hire of any servant of the Lord's. In not one of them is there the slightest hint for such a thought. Is it not plain, then, that these Greek words are only used to prop up an unscriptural procedure in paying persons called ministers a definite salary, though in the whole New Testament there is not even one instance where any one received a stated or settled sum. Would the Spirit of God use the same word, τιμῆς, in two different and, I may say, contrary senses in the same epistle? Think of Paul writing to Timothy, and saying, that honour in three cases in the epistle meant honour, but in one case honour meant the pay or support of the elders that ruled well, especially those who laboured



in the word or doctrine. And as to the argument drawn from the ox in connexion with the word honour, it is plainly this, If you give your working ox all it needs, give your working elders what is manifestly their due, even *double honour*—διπλης τιμης.

A. What you have said as to the words "double honour," seems very plain and simple to me; and we may hope that those who are unprejudiced will see it in a similar manner; but, unhappily, those who occupy an office to which gain is attached, are, by the very nature of their position, hindered from seeing things with a single or unprejudiced mind. The word of God emphatically says, "A gift blinds the eyes of the wise." But I should like to know something as to the "call," the one-man ministry, the power of churches to appoint their ministers; and whether it is true that the "Brethren" "have no ministry at all." These topics, you will perceive, we have introduced to us in the Baptist Minister's tract, p. 4.

B. Let us look at the Scriptures, and see what they say on the first three points; and then we shall have a word as to whether the "Brethren" have "really no ministry at all," as the tract states. First of all, then, I would ask the Baptist Minister to shew me even one case in the whole of the New Testament where a church gave a call to either an apostle, prophet, pastor, teacher, evangelist, or elder. When money matters were in question, the apostles said, (Acts vi.) "Look ye out seven men full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom, *whom we may appoint over this business.*" Here we have the appointment of what are called deacons; but the church did not appoint them, but merely looked them out, and the apostles appointed them. But observe, these seven men were not what are now called ministers, but deacons; and allow me further to remark, that these deacons were not ordained for what are called "chapel purposes," or collecting pew or seat-rents, or the so-called minister's money, but for *taking care of the poor saints*. And, now, as to what is called the one-man ministry, I would again say to the writer of the tract, Show me from Matthew to Revelation one man in any one church or assembly called "the minister, pastor, or preacher," of that assembly. He cannot; for such a man is never seen or mentioned in any of the assemblies spoken of in the New Testament. With regard to the third point, "that every church in the days of the apostles

had the power to *choose its own officers*," as the Baptist Minister asserts, I simply say again that, with the exception of the deacons connected with monetary matters for the poor, no church that we read of in the New Testament ever "looked out, called, or appointed," any one of the six several ministries named above. The next thing you may observe here is the contradiction in terms of the Baptist Minister. He says in this same page, (4,) Brethren insist that the churches now, whether they need or can support them or not, *must always have many ministers*; and only *eleven lines* lower down we read, "Really 'Brethren' have no ministry at all." So, then, while 'Brethren' have many ministers, they have no ministry at all. In another place in the tract he infers that the ministers are so numerous, that they are quarrelling about their gifts. This is a fair sample of what may be called the second part of his tract—the first part is occupied with what any christian person will allow are silly, foolish insinuations.

A. As regards the world "getting religiously worse and worse," I should like to know what plain scripture proofs you can give on this important subject. Have you noticed that the Baptist Minister makes George to say that " 'Brethren' teach that God has ordained that the world shall get worse and worse every day."

B. Of this statement all we need say is, that it is utterly false and base. In fact, the writer does not attempt to give the slightest proof for anything he advances. The fecundity of his imagination furnishes him with all his fanciful statements; but, surely, when writing about the people of God, he ought to have regard to truth and Scripture. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." It would be difficult to find, my good friend A., so many dark and baseless insinuations anywhere in the same space as you get in this, shall I say, extraordinary tract. I shall be glad to turn to Scripture, in order that we may both see what the unerring word of God says as to whether the world will get "religiously" or spiritually better or worse. No doubt it will get better morally, scientifically, commercially, &c.; but will it get better spiritually, is the question? I believe not; but quite the contrary. How did man proceed and end when formed in innocence and in the likeness of God in the Garden of Eden? Did man get better or worse in his second condi-

tion, having had such a warning in the first—in the antediluvian age? Instead of improving, so wicked did he become, that God said “every imagination of the thought of his heart was only evil continually,” and God was obliged to sweep all away except eight persons. Did man get “religiously” better in the next or Noahic age? On the contrary, Noah himself gets intoxicated, and his own son exposes him, and was cursed for the evil deed by his father. And from bad the human family get to worse, until we find the whole race actually worshipping idols, having cast off all allegiance to God. In this most awful state of things, God separates one man from the idolatrous mass. He chose Abraham, and said, “Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor, and *they served other gods*. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood.” (Joshua xxiv. 2, 3.) Thus all, alas! gets worse and worse. Did man get spiritually better in the patriarchal age? Quite the reverse. Joseph, the fairest and best of the twelve patriarchs, becomes, in *principle* and *purpose*, by the hands of his eleven brothers, a sold, cast-off, murdered man. These dark deeds bring the whole Jewish nation into Egypt, and, though God overruled all, into cruel bondage, and the fiery furnace of Pharaoh. Just look at man up to this, from what he was when first formed in the very image of God, and see and say whether he has improved or grown worse and worse. The heathen, on the one hand, sunk in the most beastly immoralities, (Rom. i.) and the Jews, on the other, for their unbelief and wickedness, under the tyranny of Egyptian taskmasters. Look, now, at what we may call the legal dispensation or age. Did man spiritually improve under the holy, just, and good law of God? Alas! quite the opposite. Before the commandments, which were uttered by God in the hearing of the people, were written and brought to them in tables of stone, Israel had broken the very first of the ten words or commands, and made and worshipped a golden calf. In the times of the judges, of prophets, priests, princes, and kings, did things grow better or worse with the national people of God? Let Shalmanezzer’s Assyrian captivity of the ten tribes, and Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylonian captivity of the two tribes, answer the question. (2 Kings xviii. 9—12; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 14—21.) Here, then, we have rapidly run over

man's history for a period of 4000 years, and seen, as a whole, what the history of human or religious nature has come to and ended in, and nothing can be plainer than that, instead of man becoming better, he has become worse. Come, now, to the dispensation of the first advent of our blessed Lord. Did man improve under the example and teaching of such a Teacher and Master as the Saviour was down here? By no means. The mocking, the spitting, the crown of thorns, and the ignominious and cruel cross, tell the fearful tale of man's progress under the presence, the care, and the love of the Mediator on this earth. But now comes the great point. Will man, (who in the garden, before the flood, after the flood, under the patriarchs, under the law, under judges, prophets, priests, princes, and kings, and even under the teaching and power of the Saviour Himself, only grew worse and worse) now grow better, and not worse? This is the question—and a most important question. Did man, or the professing Church, get better from the day of Pentecost, when great grace was among them all, to the day of what is commonly called the Reformation? Let Luther's loud voice answer the question. Had the State Establishment improved when she turned out 2000 good men for their nonconformity to her popish errors? Has she improved up to this day? Let Puseyism, seven infidel clergymen, and one infidel bishop, reply. Has what is called Dissent improved? Will any really-spiritual dissenter say that there is *now* as much simplicity, humility, spirituality, unity, love, and real, unctuous energy amongst dissenters, as there was 100 or 150 years ago? As to outward improvement, in the way of fine, gorgeous, cathedral-like buildings, and a fair show in the flesh, there is no lack of these things; but to me all this is a backward, downward, instead of an onward, upward, course. Moreover, look at the numberless, truly-heretical parties that have sprung up in the last two centuries. And even within a comparatively short period, Infidelity, Socinianism, Unitarianism, Irvingism, Mormonism, and Campbellism, with many other heretical parties, have gone on and increase continually. No one can deny these facts; and yet we are told that, "religiously," the world gets better. But what says the Scripture with respect to the world getting spiritually better? The *word of God* plainly declares that the tares and wheat are to *grow together*

until the end of the world or age. The mass of people will not believe the gospel, and therefore *remain tares*, and are never converted, but are "bound in bundles and burned," as the Lord Jesus has said, at the end of the now age or world. The theory, therefore, of these misguided people is flatly opposed to the word of God; for if, as they say, through the preaching of the gospel, all will be converted, there would be no tares remaining to be burned. As the days of Noah and of Lot were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. What sort of days were Noah's and Lot's? Were they days of the entire conversion of the people? Just the opposite. And *so shall it be* in the end of this our gospel day; for, except the minority, men will not believe the gospel. What says Paul to Timothy (1 Tim. iv. 1—3; 2 Tim. iii. 1—8) of the "*last times*" and the last days? Does he say, as men blindly tell us, that in the "*latter times*" and "*the last days*" the gospel will convert the whole world. Alas! alas! he tells Timothy that in the latter times and the last days the grossest wickedness will abound and to add to its hideousness, it will put on a "*form*" for a cloak. How exceedingly sorrowful that with such truths before them, men can still persevere in the belief that the world will get religiously better instead of worse and worse. Had we only these few words, and nothing more, that I shall now quote, they ought to be quite enough. "But evil men and seducers *shall wax worse and worse*, deceiving and being deceived." Who will gainsay this language? Read 2 Peter, Jude, the addresses to the seven churches, and Rev. xii., xiii., xvii., and xviii.

A. It seems singular, with so many plain scriptures on the point that persons who at all study the word of God cannot see that the world will get spiritually worse until the Lord Jesus Christ comes personally in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and *obey not* the gospel. And observe, my friend B., that this scripture is another clear proof that instead of the world becoming converted, it will assuredly get worse and worse; for otherwise how could the apostle write the words I have quoted, that the Lord Jesus would come in flaming fire and destroy all the unbelievers; for according to the Baptist Minister there would be no unbelievers to be destroyed, inasmuch as the gospel is to convert them all. But is it not said in Scripture that they shall all know me, from the

least of them to the greatest of them, (Jer. xxxi. 32—34,) and that the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, and that the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ? and I may add also that passage alluded to by the Baptist Minister in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come." Will you plainly and clearly explain how all these passages and a great number of others are to be fulfilled, and yet the world in a religious sense will get worse and worse.

*B.* In a short interview, such as ours, we could not go into the numerous proofs with which Scripture abounds. On this most interesting subject there is a short tract, "Fifteen Solemn Facts. No. 2," (London: G. Morrish,) that presents a number of scriptures in a very simple, plain style, bearing on the subject. Read the tract and judge for yourself. I may just say that what is commonly called the Second Advent of Christ clears up the whole matter. Only admit this and all is as clear as possible. Before Christ comes we say, and I think I have plainly proved that the professing church will get worse. When He comes, He will destroy the evil, and THEN, but not till then, "all shall know Him from the least to the greatest." The glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our God and His Christ; and thus the prayer, Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven, shall be fulfilled. The personal coming of Christ therefore settles and makes all clear; but if you deny or set aside His coming, you cannot possibly make the Scriptures harmonize or explain each other.

*A.* One is pained to hear a man, professing to be a minister of the gospel, use such language towards "Brethren" as, "*their wretched writers,*" "*these ignorant slanderers,*" "*wicked perverters of the pure word of the Lord.*" "*These poor deluded men* feel none of the spiritual world's longing for the universal conquests of the Saviour." The Baptist Minister asserts also that the "Brethren" say, "the Lord's Prayer ought not to be used by christian men." Is there any truth in this?

*B.* None whatever. I am amazed to think how any man, much less a man calling himself a preacher, could malign and misrepresent christian men as he does. This man makes the most heartless and slanderous statements, but

proves nothing. From his tract one would be led to think that truth had lost all its power on his conscience and that his entire aim was to write as many false accusations as he could insert into his tract against God's children. *It is the Christian* that may use the Lord's Prayer, and he alone. If it be put into the mouth of a *mere* professor, he is praying for his own destruction. If the Lord answered his prayer, and the King, and therefore the kingdom came, where would he as an unconverted man be? And thus do we see the wrong use that is constantly made of this beautiful prayer by unbelievers. The Lord Himself, in giving this prayer, did not say to unbelievers, but to His disciples, "When *ye* pray say, *Our Father*," &c. As to the Jewish character of the Lord's Prayer, I would ask you to read a tract, "The Lord's Prayer, by W. K." (London: G. Morrish.)

A. The Baptist preacher also says that "Brethren agree that it is wrong for *believers* to pray for the forgiveness of their sins," and quotes his Wesleyan as replying in these words, "Is it possible that men—the Brethren—can go to such a length in *wickedness and presumption*." Is there the least truth in these statements?

B. Not the slightest. The real truth is that the Baptist Minister does not know—that is, realize—the forgiveness of his sins as an experimental, individual, present thing, nor consequently does he preach it. To him as yet it is a blessing to be looked for or sought after; for the lines of the hymn he quotes in his tract, *three words* of which he gives in italics, "*Let me hide myself in thee*," prove at once where he really is, as regards the forgiveness of his sins. With him it is as yet, "*Let me do it*." If a man asks you to let him do a thing, it is self-evident that he has not done it yet, or why say, *Let me do it*. But mark again the error and spiritual blindness of this man. Instead of believing the two great truths of God, that the believer is hidden in Christ and that God Himself by His Spirit has hidden him there, he neither believes the one nor the other, but wishes to get hidden because as yet he is not, and then wishes to do it himself, and therefore says, "*LET ME* hide myself in thee."—It was the Lord shut Noah into the ark, and not Noah himself: it was the Lord put Moses into the cleft of the rock, and not Moses himself. And now, in this dispensation, the Holy Spirit writes to the Colossian believer, and says,

“Your life is hid with Christ in God.” Noah, Moses, and the believer of the New Testament, therefore, knew that *they were* hidden in God’s safety-place, and *could not say*, “Let me hide myself;” for this would be disobedience to, and unbelief in, God. But notwithstanding these forcible truths, the Baptist Minister is still asking that *he may hide himself*. I would ask this minister, in faithfulness, a plain question, which is this, Are you, in your conscience, before God, a fit person to fill the office of a preacher of present forgiveness to others, when, in your own case, you are only looking or asking for a future forgiveness yourself, and neither know nor realize it as your own? “Brethren” teach, both orally and in their writings, first, that the believer *is* forgiven *all* his sins—“*Having* forgiven you,” says the apostle, “ALL TRESPASSES,” and again, “Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake HATH FORGIVEN YOU;” (Eph. iv. 32;) second, that the believer *is* justified from all his sins—“By him,” says Paul, “*all* that believe ARE JUSTIFIED FROM ALL THINGS;” (Acts xiii. 39;) “*Being* justified by faith, we HAVE PEACE WITH GOD, through our Lord Jesus Christ;” (Rom. v. 1;) “And by one offering he HATH PERFECTED FOR EVER them that *are* sanctified;” (Heb. x. 14;) third, that though being pardoned, justified, and perfected, the believer needs a daily pardon, because of his failures as a worshipper, son, servant, and soldier of God, and that this daily forgiveness is also provided for in the present priesthood and intercession of Christ at the right hand of God; as it is written, “He that *is* washed needs not save to wash his feet,” or walk down here, “but *is* clean every whit”—“If we (real Christians) say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not: and if any man sin, *we* have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” These are plain scriptures on the point in hand, and “Brethren” teach them freely and fully. “Brethren” have been attacked by many Baptist Ministers. One of them was so violent and untruthful in his statements, that in the second edition of his pamphlet he had to set aside seventeen pages of the first: but anything so silly, shameless, and barefaced as this “Familiar Conversation” tract I have not met with yet.



A. Politics, trade, and the assertion that some of the writers among "Brethren" speak of Jerusalem as the probable home of the sect, are the next features dwelt on in the tract. Has the Baptist Minister given a correct or true statement about "Brethren" as to any of these points?

B. Let us look at his assertions, and fairly judge. The writer tells us the "'Brethren' think we should leave the government of our country to the wicked; and many of their writers have written in the most violent way against entrusting the people with political power. Neither in the church nor in the world do those dear 'Brethren' allow any power to the people." "Brethren" are very sorry to see wicked persons in power, and pray constantly for all that are in authority, that, as the Scriptures say, we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness." But as to meddling or being mixed up with the politics of this world, what says the Saviour: "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. They are not of the world, *even as I am not of the world.*" What says Paul, "*Come out from amongst them, and be ye separate.*" What says James, "The friendship of this world is enmity with God, whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world *is the enemy of God.*" And what says the Apostle John, "All that is in the world . . . . is not of the Father, but is of the world." Did the Saviour, the apostles, or the first assemblies of Christians, meddle with worldly politics? Surely not. As to "Brethren" not allowing any power to what the writer calls the people, it is the "Brethren" only who do allow the christian people real and full power, that is to say, they allow the full sovereign rights of the Spirit of God in the body of Christ, composed as it is of God's people. The not allowing the people liberty is the very thing "Brethren" complain so much of as regards so-called ministers. Amongst "Brethren" there is the fullest liberty, but with the ministerial man there is really none. Until very lately, a christian man could not even pray until he was told by the minister to do so; and to this day, at the Lord's Supper, there is no liberty whatever, for all must be silent except the minister. "Ye have been called unto liberty, only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh." With regard to the Baptist Minister's statement, that some of the writers among "Brethren" do indeed speak of Jerusalem as the probable home of the sect, I can only say that neither orally nor in writing have

I ever heard or seen such an absurd idea. I am aware that the Mormonites have spoken and written of the Salt Lake or Jerusalem as their probable home; and the desire to identify "Brethren" with Mormonites, is much too plain in this attack of the Baptist Minister to be mistaken. But is it not disreputable in a writer to pretend to quote from "Brethren's" writings that which their writings never contained? Heaven will be the home of the bride and body of Christ, and Jerusalem will be the home of the restored Jewish remnant during the millennium, when "the Lord shall be king over all the earth." The allusion to trade is, to me, a most sorrowful picture of the way upright, conscientious men are being constantly threatened by ministers when they wish to obey their conscience and the word of God. "You will lose your trade, you will lose your business," is the constant cry of the minister, in order to deter or frighten the Christian from following what he knows to be the path and truth of God. But as I have said before, real Christians are seeing through all this. Another stratagem is, to offer a man a deaconship, or some such post, to keep his conscience quiet and prevent him following what he feels and sees to be the scriptural course he should adopt.

A. It seems to me a sad thing that the Baptist Minister should feign himself to be another man, and attack "Brethren" under the guise of a Wesleyan; and this is the more remarkable when we remember that not very long ago he had a paper war with a Wesleyan Minister on the subject of baptism. To allude to class-meetings as he does, when we know that as a Baptist Minister he does not agree with such meetings, is, to say the least of it, a cunning device; but frankness and uprightness are better than cunning and deception, especially in a man calling himself a minister.

B. I think with you. We always find that the man, be he who he may, that comes out in his true colours, and battles fairly and openly for what he believes to be the truth, fares much better than the man who pretends to be one thing while he really is another, as in the case of this strange tract. Many real Christians among the Wesleyans do not agree with the class-meetings, and if a Christian, not amongst Wesleyans, but amongst "Brethren," expresses himself strongly on this point, is it not a much more honest and christian course to pursue than to pre-

tend to be and write as a Wesleyan when the writer is not a Wesleyan but a Baptist Minister, and as such does not agree with Wesleyans either in the class-meetings, baptism, church government, nor ministry; but, as I have said, openly opposes them when it serves his purpose?

A. You will perceive that not only does the Baptist Minister write and speak as a Wesleyan, but pleads the cause of the Congregationalist Minister also. Although a Baptist preacher himself, he never, *even once*, alludes to anything in his tract concerning the Baptists. Stratagems like these should not be resorted to by any man, much less a person calling himself a preacher of the gospel. But the glaringly false things he accuses "Brethren" of are truly startling. Think of him saying that in our writings we call a Congregational Minister "an usurper," "a grievous wolf." Have you ever seen such epithets applied to a Congregational Minister in any of the "Brethren's" writings?

B. Never. I can only account for his tract or his abuse of "Brethren" by allowing his feelings and temper to get the better of him, because of some of "his members," as they are called, leaving him and uniting themselves with "Brethren;" but though others of his members have left him and joined another Baptist Society, he has not thought it wise to say anything.

A. The tract says, "For the most part, however, the 'Brethren' are useful in drawing off the impure and obstructive elements of the christian church." Is there any truth in this statement?

B. All I need say is, that instead of the Baptist Minister writing so slanderously of "Brethren," because some of "his members" have recently left him and connected themselves with "Brethren," he ought, on his own showing, to be thankful to them; but as in many other instances in his tract, he is found contradicting his own words, so in this. Those persons who have left him have been publicly lauded and praised by him, but according to his tract they were only impure and obstructive elements.

A. The writer of the tract speaks of "Brethren" leading away silly women and causing division; but the exact opposite to this is what I have always thought they did; but what say you?

B. "Brethren" endeavour to lead women, whether wise or silly, to the Saviour, and to Him alone, and as to

divisions, they deplore and condemn them most strongly. The Baptist Minister's imagination seems to conjure up all kinds of phantoms with respect to "Brethren." "Brethren" have two great objects in view, one as regards the world of sinners, the other the Church of the living God. As regards the unconverted, they desire and work to bring them to feel their sinfulness and to believe alone in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. And with respect to professing Christians, who in this small town form already not less than ten divisions, the "Brethren's" great desire is to unite all the real Christians together to Christ as their only centre, and thus cause Christians to cease the upholding of divisions. Of course the *first* or *chief* thought of every Christian should be the glory of God and of His Christ.

A. We may now, if you please, before closing, glance briefly at the "prayer," and the last apparent *desire* or *wish* of the Baptist Minister for the "Brethren." Do not the prayer and wish strangely and sorrowfully contradict each other?

B. The man who says, "Let us pray for them," and in almost the next words says, "*Let them die* through the want of *their filthy* carrion nutriment on which they sustain their life," appears, to say the least of it, to have been in anything but a prayerful mood at that moment. This prayer and wish I shall leave the christian reader to judge of; but I may just say this, to put this not very pleasant word, "carrion" in its right place, that the Saviour declares that *where* the carcass is, ~~THERE~~ the feeders are gathered together; and I may further add, that the clean bird, not like the carnivorous bird, instead of feeding on, *flies from*, the carrion, the dove flew from the carrion that may have been floating about in the day of the deluge and joined the people of God in the ark; but the raven staid behind and found her food *where* the carrion *remained*. It is most sad to have even to review such statements as we have met with in this tract; but I am thankful that I have done with it. If the writer believes that he is right and that "Brethren" are wrong, should he not frankly and openly show from the word of God where he thinks he is right and where he thinks they are wrong, instead of all this mere surmise and misrepresentation which he has indulged in? I, for my part, should be glad, in a series of tracts, the Lord giving me grace, in a friendly,

frank, upright, christian spirit to enter on the subject, taking nothing but Scripture and facts as my guide; and let the believing people of God have the Scriptures and the facts and form their own conclusions. I have neither sect, system, nor human support to defend, nor anything but the word of God; and if it can be shown from Scripture that I am wrong, I shall be thankful for it, and give up at once my present position. If I might offer a word of advice to the writer of the tract and his friends, it would be that of Gamaliel's, "And now I say unto you, refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God," (Acts v. 38, 39.) And now my friend A, I would offer a word of counsel to the unconverted and the converted. Should any in an unconverted state read this tract, to such I would say, Look not to man; know that you are a great and, at present, a ruined sinner; but believing alone in the Lord Jesus Christ, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though red like crimson, they shall be as wool." To the child of God I offer this advice, Be very prayerful and very watchful against all evil; look not down, but look up; look not back, but look forward; look not in, but look out; look not to the right nor to the left, but always straight on; and if you are in connexion with anything contrary to the plain word of God, or to the simple union and worship of the Christians we read of there, may God give you grace to leave it at whatever cost.



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