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# ANOTHER APPEAL.

TO THE BRETHREN MEETING IN BAR STREET,  
SCARBOROUGH.

*East Ayton, Aug. 6th, 1860.*

**BELOVED BRETHREN,**

It has been a constant source of grief to me for nearly three years that I could not conscientiously have communion with you; and it is because I believe there has been mutual sorrow that I now address you on the subject.

It may seem strange to some that I should do so after three years' separation. To this I can only say that I have often thought of it, but knowing that much had been said and written, I waited, prayed, and hoped that the Lord would use that to turn your minds. But seeing that this is not the case, it has occurred to me whether it is faithful love, either to you or to the Lord, to withhold from you that which influenced my own course in this important matter.

Twelve years ago this matter was judged in Scarborough, as elsewhere, and you met for years, on the ground of separation from the evil, in Merchant's Row, where we had happy fellowship until 1857, when the character and connexions of the meeting were changed, by the reception of those into communion who held entirely different principles, and who were a separate party everywhere. This changed the principle of the meeting. It is true personal matters were mixed up with it, i.e., at Scar-



borough, in 1857, which made it exceedingly difficult for me to separate from those brethren with whom I had happily and amicably laboured in the gospel. It was also asserted that the state of things was altered—that there was not the same ground for separation now as at first. And not being willing to act hastily, specially as my affections were with you, I corresponded with many brethren on both sides of the question, to obtain information. The result was, that I felt sure *there was* the same ground for separation *now*, as twelve years ago. Allow me, then, to put the case as it appears to me.

The original ground of separation was, (and is now,) that the assembly meeting at Bethesda, Bristol, refused to investigate and judge evil doctrines, held and taught by Mr. Newton and others.

These doctrines, it is said, “many Christians are unable to judge, because they do not understand them.” Being so subtly stated, many could not, perhaps, if asked, give a correct definition of them: this however only proves them the more dangerous, being more difficult of detection.

Connected with much subtle reasoning, Mr. N. taught, “That the Lord Jesus, on account of being born a man and an Israelite, was all His life (with some alleviations) obnoxious to, and under, the wrath of God; and that He had to work His way up to the place where God could meet Him, and there be relieved from this wrath.” And mark, Mr. N. taught, that this was “*not on the cross,*” neither was it *endured instead of others,* “*vicariously.*” It was endured by the blessed Lord *on His own account,* because “*He was* (Mr. N. says) *in a relative position to God* as a man, and an Israelite.” I believe very few, if any, will deny this to be a correct statement of what Mr. N. held and taught, and wished to disseminate wherever he could, by tracts, lectures, private meetings, and manuscript notes, from Plymouth as a centre. Such efforts were made at Bethesda, when some brethren there remonstrated, and

called for judgment of the doctrine. This was refused by the assembly at Bethesda, and reasons given for the refusal, in the well-known "Letter of the Ten;" and thus brethren who had judged this doctrine, and separated from it elsewhere, had no alternative but to *separate from them, and all others taking the same ground, until they retracted what they had done.*

And now, dear brethren, have I to prove to you that there is evil in being associated, and so identified, with those holding doctrines dishonouring to the Lord Jesus? Alas! so it is; as my only reason for ceasing to have communion with you is, that I hold you identified by association with this evil, Christ-dishonouring doctrine.

You say, Give me the word for it. Here it is, then. "*Purge out the old leaven.*" (1 Cor. v. 7.) Does not this apply to bad doctrine as well as evil walk? "Do not ye *judge them that are within?*" (Ver. 12.) Are not these brethren, and to be judged *because they are such?* "*Prove all things: hold fast that which is good.*" (1 Thess. v. 21.) "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but *try the spirits* whether they are of God: *because many false prophets* are gone out into the world." (1 John iv. 1.) "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.*" (2 John 10, 11.) "If a man therefore *purge himself from these,* [i. e., from Hymenæus and Philetus, who concerning the truth have erred, (ver. 17, 18,)] he shall be a vessel unto honour, *sanctified and meet for the master's use.*" (2 Tim. ii. 21.) Are not these scriptures enough?

In the face of these plain scriptures, Bethesda refuses to investigate and judge this evil doctrine; and then gives nine reasons for not doing it, though the framers of the "Letter of the Ten" knew the nature of the doctrine. (p. 4.)

The Lord says, "Try the spirits." Bethesda says, "It is not well to do so." (Reason 1.) The Lord says, "Prove all things." Bethesda says, "It is too much



trouble." (Reason 9.) The Lord says, "Judge them that are within." Bethesda excuses itself by saying, "The evil is at Plymouth." (*ibid.*) The Lord says, "Purge out the old leaven." "If a man purge himself from these," who teach bad doctrine, "he shall be a vessel unto honour." "If any man bring not the doctrine of Christ, receive him not into your house, (then certainly not into the Church,) neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is *partaker of his evil deeds.*" To these Bethesda replies, "It will promote strife, and the way of truth will be evil spoken of. We cannot identify ourselves with either party." (The parties were those who held evil doctrine, and those who had separated from it.) "At the same time we wish it to be *distinctly understood* that we 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.*" (Reason 8.)

Those meeting at Bethesda here declare, as plainly as possible, that "they desire to be considered as *particularly associated with*" a class of professing Christians so designated as evidently to include Mr. N.'s party at Plymouth.

Is it not bidding God speed to those holding and teaching unsound doctrine? Are not such, then, partakers of their evil deeds? And are not all, who have taken Bethesda's part, equally guilty? You have taken this part, and condemned those who judged and separated from evil doctrine.

It is said that "Bethesda has withdrawn the 'Letter of the Ten' and judged the evil." I am sorry to deny this and to say that it is all an evasion.\* Here are the proofs.

\* We are, upon inquiry, told they hold it to be "most evil doctrine." Then ask, "Should it not be judged?" "So it has been," is the answer. "But what of the 'Letter of the Ten' then?" "Oh, that has been withdrawn." "How?" "Well, certainly not in a formal way, for it was never a rule. We have no rules but the

In 1857 I wrote Mr. Craik, begging him to use his influence, that the principles of the "Letter of the Ten" might be withdrawn. This he laid before the labouring brethren, and the answer returned was, in his own words, as follows:—"Inasmuch as the matter is in its own nature so obscure, and the sectarian bias with which it has been treated so manifest, *the reasons given in the 'Letter of the Ten' for not committing the church at Bethesda to a formal decision on the matter seem to me only stronger with the lapse of years.*"

So far from withdrawing the letter, Mr. C. says, "the reasons given in it (mark) for *not committing the church at Bethesda to a formal decision, seem stronger with the lapse of years.*" Therefore, the church at Bethesda has never been committed to a formal decision on this matter, because of the reasons given in the "Letter of the Ten." Alas! brethren, the letter has not been withdrawn; the evil has not been judged; "the church at Bethesda has never been committed to a formal decision on this matter of evil doctrine," Mr. Craik being witness.

But further, Mr. Craik says in the same letter, that the doctrine is not bad enough to be separated from. I first quote a passage from my letter to him, and then give his reply, *verbatim*. "One who brings not the

word of God." "Indeed! what was it then? I understand a rule is that by which our course of action is regulated, upon any occasion, or under any given circumstances." "But it was only our judgment, come to at the time. The church at Bethesda was never committed to a formal decision on the matter." Astonishing! The mildest term I can apply to this is, that it is an evasion from beginning to end.

1. The church at Bethesda was committed to a "formal decision on the matter," only it was *against judging* the doctrine. This formal decision was embodied in the "Letter of the Ten," and agreed to by the assembly. 2. Therefore, *this was their rule* for that time and these circumstances, (certainly not from the word of God,) and remains to this day in its original, yea, increased, force. 3. Hence it has not been withdrawn at all. 4. The doctrine, then, certainly has not been judged. For, 5, it is not held to be bad enough doctrine to merit the judgment of separation from it.

doctrine of Christ you reject;\* but, are not those who receive the heretic partakers of his evil deeds, and to be treated the same as himself?" (2 John 10, 11.) "Until Mr. Newton retracts his evil doctrines, all who receive him are partakers with him, and to be treated the same as himself." To this Mr. Craik replies: "Supposing we were all satisfied that Mr. N. was one who had renounced the faith of Christ, your remarks would be just: *such persons, and all who follow them, ought to be avoided and set aside from the fellowship of the Church of God.*" But "*I am not aware of any amongst us who would regard him in the light of a heretic, in the sense you use that term.*" Surely this is plain enough. They have not judged it, because none in Bethesda think it heresy bad enough, that "such persons," (those who hold it,) "and all who follow them, should be avoided, and set aside from the fellowship of the Church of God." Mr. Craik allows the force of the passage in 2 John, but denies that the doctrine is so bad as to come under it. Bethesda cannot, nay, does not, set aside from her fellowship Mr. N. and his friends, though they hold the doctrines.

What are we, then, to say and think of those who have upheld Bethesda all along, and tell inquirers that "'The Letter of the Ten' is withdrawn," "The evil doctrine has been judged," &c.? Those who are neither for nor against it, tell us, "It is most evil doctrine," "Most unsound doctrine," "Worse than Socinianism, because more subtle," and yet condemn those who have separated from it, and justify those who declare it is not so bad; making statements which deceive an inquirer. Alas! this, to me, is the worst feature of the case, and what tended most to confirm me in being entirely separate from those taking such a position.

We are, further, told by these, that Mr. N. has given up and retracted his evil doctrines. Supposing

\* They profess to judge individual saints who apply for communion.

that he has, does that alter Bethesda's unscriptural position and action? But where is the proof\* that he has retracted?

It is said,† "A person took extracts from Mr. N.'s own writings to him, asking his judgment on them, but not saying whose they were. Mr. N. declared the first "*bad*," the second "*worse*," the third "*horribly bad*." It was asked, "whether the connexion in which they might stand could not qualify them?" "No," Mr. N. replies; "not any connexion whatever can make them otherwise." He was then told they were his own published statements: his tracts were produced, and there they were. "Well," says Mr. N., "I cannot alter my judgment of them." The person then asks, "Will you give me that acknowledgment in writing; it will rejoice the hearts of brethren!" After a little embarrassment and hesitation, the reply was "No; brethren have treated me ill, and I will not for their sakes do it."

Is this a retraction, after Mr. N. had assiduously taught and disseminated these doctrines, admitted by himself as "bad and horrible doctrines;" and because brethren had disowned him for "horrible doctrines," he will not *retract at all*? for that is really what it comes to. Was not the blessed Lord "ill-treated" by these horrible doctrines? But who thinks of His character when his own is in question?

Must there not be something wrong in the moral perceptions of those who give such an account in defence of Mr. N.? He has just cause, certainly, to exclaim, "Save me from my friends."

\* The proof generally alleged is that in his most recent tract on the subject he does not teach the doctrine he once held. But suppose this to be so, he does not *retract* it; and can it be allowed in the Church of God for any one publicly to teach grievous error, and then silently drop it, without stating whether he now holds it or not, only leaving the question to be answered by inference from his later writings?

† This I give, as told me by one looked up to as a teacher amongst you, and received by him from those taking Bethesda's part. It was told to many as a palliation of Mr. N.'s doctrine.

But I must close this letter, having stated as plainly as I can, those facts and principles which confirm me in separation from those who have taken Bethesda's position. I am convinced that those brethren who separated from this evil, were right in doing so, according to the scriptures quoted above; and that those who did not were wrong. The lapse of years has not altered this; as I have proved that the positions taken at first are the same now. Are, then, those who stood for the truth at first to retract, and disown what they did? or shall those who refused to do so confess their sin? The Lord give grace for the latter. Amen.

Finally, I would ask you, whether you took a place outside denominations, and left principles dishonouring to the Lord there, to be associated together in such looseness, that evil doctrine (the worst form of evil) is not to be judged and put away? Surely not. Better would it be for us who have left sections, where the fundamental truths are guarded, wrong as they are on other points, to return there, than be associated in the position you occupy. Thank the Lord, however, there is no need for either alternative. His own word is quite plain and all-sufficient; though obedience to it may crush the flesh, and all that it values; for obedience to Christ is the way of the cross still.

Believe, dear brethren, the above a sincere pledge of my love for you in the truth,

GEORGE RYMER.

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*Price One Halfpenny.*

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