
I remember the time with gratitude to the Lord, when the last words of Jesus, “That they all may be one,” filled the hearts of many brethren. To this end they served, laboured, and showed untiring patience and forbearance, “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Difference of judgment on many points existed amongst them, without disturbing either their harmony or their love. On the subjects of baptism, church principles, prophecy, doctrine, ecclesiastical discipline, the lawfulness of holding military and law professions, widely differing opinions were held and tolerated by them; so that in their midst might be seen assembled, infant and adult baptists; lawyers serving in the full range of their profession; officers in the army and navy; dissenters of all sorts, with their various opinions, still clinging, in whole or in part, to their respective denominations, and clergymen who had not abandoned their church or their gowns. Yet none sought, nor even dreamed then of lording it over the consciences of their brethren, or imagined for a moment that defilement was engendered, or purity endangered by such an admixture. Brethren were left to the dictates of conscience, and the judgment seat of Christ; all being happy in the thought, that each held his peculiar tenets and modes of action with an upright conscience in the presence of God, and approved of by him with whom motives are the highest consideration.

This apparently incongruous and heterogeneous state, God

remarkably owned; the basis was sufficiently wide to admit fathers, young men, and babes in Christ.

Mr. Darby, in his "Narrative of Facts," page 11, thus describes the brethren. "They did not pretend to appoint ministers, nor organize any church or special membership, for they held the unity of all saints. Themselves outside the camp, whatever saints had faith to follow them were companions in their position, and they were not separated in life nor essential unity from those who could not follow them. In this spirit they walked for a good while."

Such, then, was their original basis and position. The first invasion upon such principles and characteristics appeared at Plymouth, efforts having been made there to set up a certain unity in testimony against all who differed with Mr. Newton, a leading brother there. The next sectarian movement appears with those who are carrying on a bitter and hostile warfare against Bethesda, under a circular letter put forth by Mr. Darby, by which he separates from Bethesda, and all who receive from thence. His words are these; "For my own part, I should neither go to Bethesda in its present state, nor while in that state go where persons from it were knowingly received." From thenceforward a new and painful line of things was introduced. In the commencement of the circular, Mr. Darby avows the following to be his reasons for so acting.—"If brethren are incapable of this service to Christ, then they ought not in any way be owned as a body to which such service is confided." That is, if they don't keep out the work and power of Satan, (his circular refers to) he will give them up as a *body*. And yet in his "Narrative of Facts" he says that brethren at first did not pretend to organize any church or special membership, for they held the unity of all saints; yet he now

contrary to the original position, regards them as a *body*, for there cannot be a body without membership; and a membership, according to Mr. Darby's view, is opposed to the unity of all saints; and so he foregoes the unity of all saints for the position of a body which is now before his mind. These perfectly new thoughts, I conceive, lie at the root of our present divided state; for it is clear that at the first brethren assumed no such position as that of a body—for they held the unity of all saints, and received all, no matter from what quarter they came, provided they held those few and general truths which bring salvation, the same being adorned in their life and conduct.

At the first, love and forbearance prevailed over all differences; the Spirit of God and the word were relied upon in every time of emergency; Christ and the union of saints were associated in our minds; private feelings, jealousies, questions, and strife, were not heard of. In this spirit brethren laboured, served, and enjoyed happy fellowship together, each waiting on the other, and receiving from each, what God had given.

Plymouth sectarianism was the first plain intimation of an altered condition of things. Mr. Darby, feeling inadequate to rectify the errors existing in the gathering at Plymouth, judged that the only remedy left was, to separate from and divide the saints. Division is now spread nearly over all the gatherings, sanctioned by many leading brethren, and plainly taught and urged in Mr. Darby's circular letter. Divisions, distractions, and invectives, at once flowed like a mighty torrent into the midst of the gatherings of brethren, and all barriers seemed to be removed, so that each felt at liberty to act and say as he pleased. A new basis, never before contemplated by brethren, began to be established, with almost

as much zeal and activity as appeared at the first movement of brethren, though now upon entirely opposite principles.

By this new test, all are now excommunicated and rejected from communion, who either go to or receive from Bethesda; and some thousands of christians, as godly and as conscientious as any in the church of God, are cast out, as though they were heathens or publicans. This test is the more monstrous when we consider that the leaders of the Bethesda body are amongst the brightest lights in the church of God.

To maintain the spirit of this circular, and to enjoy the favour of this exclusive party, now at the head of all sects, many are constrained to assent to what is not understood, so difficult and involved are the questions at issue; whilst any independent expression of judgment—if not equal to the amount of the party feeling, subjects one to all sorts of evil charges and insinuations.

Division in the midst of the Lord's people, is now by many as strongly recommended as it was at the first condemned, every effort then being in favour of unity, and against division.

The Plymouth evils were said to be the insisting on unity in testimony, sectarianism, clericalism, the undue influence on the part of leading brethren over the consciences of saints, false doctrine and untruth, to get rid of such evils, division was consummated at Plymouth.

Now I think it will be seen that, not only have we division thus sanctioned by leading brethren, but that the very dividing movement which proposed to remedy the evils complained of, has similar and corresponding ones. The exclusionists unhesitatingly appropriate to themselves, zeal for the Lord and his glory, in contrast with those who differ with them as to their present course: indeed, they hesitate not

to speak of themselves in the most exalted and unmeasured terms of approbation; some, deceived by their assumptions are desirous of occupying with them so high an elevation; whilst others, terrified by their violent language and opposition, are taken in the snare of division.

That the matters complained of had a real existence at Plymouth, is not questioned. That there were also things to complain of at Bethesda, upon a minor scale, would be also admitted. What is strongly felt by all who cannot share in the spirit of party and division is, that the means adopted in both cases, and the line pursued to effect a remedy, were as opposed to Scripture and the Spirit of Christ as light is to darkness. Hence the position of those who are unwilling to be carried down the stream of division—where to, they know not, but who are as willing as any to refuse and to reject unholy leaven in the church, when the same is made plain and obvious, provided it be done in a godly and scriptural way, feeling that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God, and that great care and discrimination are needed in dealing with the faith and consciences of the saints. Such brethren feel assured that they continue on the original basis, which was, that the blood of the Lamb was the union of saints, and not agreement upon matters of doubtful disputation and questions.

Unity in testimony against all differing with Mr. Newton, was a Plymouth offence; and here again may be seen the same evil on the exclusive side, and that more strikingly. For the exclusionists not only unite in testimony against Bethesda, but they intolerantly reject all who differ with them in judgment on the question.

Sectarianism was another. All who differed with Mr. Newton were not welcomed at Plymouth: all who now differ

with the exclusive party on the Bethesda question, are not only not welcomed, but are cast out of the church.

Error on the Lord's humanity was another. To repeat the numberless crude and erroneous statements which have come from the exclusionists on this subject would fill a volume, from many of which I would shrink with as much abhorrence as I would from any that have been propounded by Mr. Newton—in principle amounting to this; that while Mr. N. degrades our Lord's humanity, *his opponents well nigh deny it altogether*; and I believe *all are wrong who seek to be wise above that which is written, and who curiously inquire into a subject known only in its mystery, length, and breadth, by the Divine Mind. The attempt to solve possible cases, where no words of scripture afford the solution, I think to be imprudent and gratuitous in the extreme, and that both parties are culpable in this particular.*

Clericalism, and the undue influence of leading brethren, were also charged upon Plymouth leaders. Such elements I believe to have been the virus of this dividing movement. The undue influence of leaders and guides first carried a division at Plymouth, and then called for a division, where their voice, authority, and actings were not yielded to with implicit obedience,—in many cases whole gatherings,—in some a considerable portion were quietly consigned over to the exclusive side, without knowing why or wherefore. In many instances it will be found that neither the faith nor consciences of those who have thus gone over, have been exercised at all on the matter; and while professing to reject Bethesda and its receivers by the very position they occupy, they really have no understanding of the subjects in dispute. When Mr. Darby put his letter of interdict on Bethesda and its receivers into circulation, no option was

left; brethren were forced either to abandon him or Bethesda; so that the real question with many was,—Darby or Bethesda.

Untruth was another. Here also have the exclusive party failed, as many of credible testimony assert, and of which I have also myself daily and sorrowful proof. Having heard of many grave charges made against Bethesda, I took every pains and care to trace them out, the most of which turned out to be simple falsehoods, and others to have been highly and cruelly exaggerated.

If these things be true, is it not a striking coincidence that, having unskilfully undertaken to reform the churches, that the very evils they sought to expose they have fallen into themselves.

The following scriptures are compiled with a hope of encouraging brethren to stir up one another to unity, and to abhor and oppose division.—

TEXTS ON RECEIVING BRETHEREN.

Matt. x. 40. ' "He that receiveth you receiveth me."

Acts, x. 47. "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" "Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I that I could withstand God?—xi. 17.

Rom. xiv. 1. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." **xv. 7.**—"Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God."

2 Cor. vii. 2. "Receive us: we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man."

Gal. ii. 9. "And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed

to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship."

Phil. ii. 29. "Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such in reputation."

Phil. 12. "Thou therefore receive him that is mine own bowels."

WHOM NOT TO RECEIVE.

Gal. i. 9. "As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

2 John, 10. "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed."

THE SIN OF REFUSING BRETHREN.

3 John, 9, 10, 11. "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrophes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore if I come I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words, and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil, hath not seen God."

It cannot be questioned, that simple faith in Jesus brought all the early disciples together, and that the scriptures speak of no other ground of reception. Much ignorance prevailed in the minds of the early converts; a vast field of truth had yet to be explored, and the first principles had to be better learned. All that believed were together,—all who believed Jesus to be the Son of God; and nothing more was required.

The Eunuch was baptized on his confession that Jesus was the Son of God. So also was Cornelius and his company, having received faith and the Holy Ghost. To refuse such, Peter solemnly, before the sectarian Jews, asserted, *would be to withstand God*; and he vindicates himself accordingly. God had put his seal there; and to deny that seal would be to deny Him whose seal it was. Is not this a solemn, searching, and condemning word, for those who exclude and cast out any whose faith and walk are blameless, and who require other knowledge as a term of communion besides faith in Jesus. But, alas! it is now with us as it is with others,—sectarianism has nipped the bud, and spoiled fruitful vegetation in our midst. When first the healthful breezes of the Spirit pass over the convert, or the early history of churches, sectarianism can find no place; the atmosphere is too genial for the icy grasp, and the iron band of sectarianism; it only finds a place when the energies of the spirit have decayed; and then, as a substitute, human regulations are set up, to protect and regulate the assembly.

Further; the feeble in faith were not to be puzzled with questions; doubtful disputations were not to be erected as barriers to their reception. Jesus had received them, and surely his followers should do the same. I would ask, what is this Bethesda question—at least to many, but a doubtful disputation? Paul pleads with the Corinthians to be received by them, seeing that by no act of immorality had he contradicted his profession. Epaphroditus, being a servant of the church, and Onesimus being Paul's bowels in the gospel, are also pleaded for to be received.

To refuse all who bring not the gospel of grace,—Gal. i. or who deny the Father and the Son, are requirements so obvious, that all godly christians would consent to. *Nothing*

can be more unfair, in my judgment, than to apply the dreadful doctrines condemned in John's epistle to the present question. The only parallel that can be found to the present exclusive system is, the case of Diotrephes.—

Firstly. "Diotrephes loved to have the preeminence."

Secondly. "Prated against us with malicious words."

Thirdly. "Refused to receive the brethren."

Fourthly. "And cast them out of the church who would."

Those who hold with the separating movement seek to vindicate themselves by saying that they do not excommunicate, but only "withdraw from," or "turn away," or place under discipline. The fact is, that they do excommunicate and anathematize those who love the Lord Jesus, simply because they differ with them in their judgment and course about Bethesda. I am aware of instances where parties who had been in communion were told that they would not be permitted to return, and were refused their former places. I know also of instances where persons virtually in communion were told that they must withdraw, because of this question. If these cases do not amount to excommunication, I know not what the nature of it really is.

It is equally untrue, save in some cases where the spirit of intolerance ascends to the highest point, that they "withdraw from," and will not "hold company with," those to whom they refuse communion; for there is an inter-communion going on in the intimacies of private life; and this would be still more so were it not for the fear of displeasing the more zealous ones.

The passages referred to by them, are in 2 Thess. iii. 6 and 14, and have no reference either to the putting away from or the refusing communion. The 11th verse explains the kind of offence on account of which the withdrawal should take

place, and company be refused, namely; "Working not at all;" busy bodies, being a milder form of discipline *within the body* in relation to offenders there, whose state was not sufficiently aggravated to cast out and put away from among them, as commanded in 1 Cor. v. It is therefore a sad wresting of scripture, thus improperly to use and apply it to the present movement against Bethesda. When a person is refused communion, he is to be dealt with as though he were an heathen man and a publican, and all further discipline ends; for discipline can only be exercised upon those who are within the body. As to the few leaving an assembly, setting up another table, and a distinct meeting, thereby placing the residue left behind under discipline, the idea is so strangely novel and absurd—so wholly devoid of all scripture precedent, that no sober answer can be given.

I feel assured that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred where wrong existed in our midst, God would be graciously pleased to save the company from division and separation, if the complaints and offences were rightly pressed, and in the Spirit of Christ. It is striking, that the apostle never demanded a church to exercise discipline, save in the most obvious cases, and in relation to matters within itself, which all had or could have personal knowledge of. To inquire what would Paul do in case his commands were disobeyed, is, to say the least, trifling with scripture; and to ask the question with a view of establishing an authority upon such an inference, in order to divide the saints, or to sanction their position when divided, is highly dangerous to the unity of the body, and the discipline of the church; and further, is opening a door for lawlessness of every kind. Besides, how dangerous the idea, that persons *may form doctrines upon inference* without the sanction of scripture or precedent, and

even against both. Where such a course would lead to, who can tell? All apostolic precept and example are in direct opposition to division in the church; yet, if an answer is needed, we can at once affirm that, although the apostle's commands were continually slighted and disobeyed by the churches, and to himself every personal offence offered, yet in no instance did he either leave or divide a church; like his blessed Master, he endured all things, and suffered all things; and thus he proved his apostleship in all patience. 2 Cor. xii.

Although the Corinthians did cast out one particular offender, yet they left untouched and unjudged a vast body of evil, which was commanded by the apostle to be put away. This we plainly learn in 2 Cor. xii. 13. Although found in much disobedience to the apostle's commands, given in 1 Cor. v., yet the apostle comes to this very church—not to divide, but to purify and to restore; he loved the more abundantly the less he was loved. He anticipated to find there much to mourn over, and much to be humbled for;—"And lest when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness, and fornication, and lasciviousness, which they have committed," 2 Cor. xii. 21. That the last state of the churches showed constant disobedience, would not be difficult to prove; but instead of dividing, all means are resorted to, to build up and restore.

Instead of unity in testimony, as pretended to by the exclusionists, appearing on the face of their movement and acting, it is impossible to conceive a greater confusion of opinions. Though all agree to reject Bethesda, yet their reasons for so doing are utterly at variance one with the other, and, in many instances, most absurd. Again, their lines of

discipline, with their boundaries, are also as dissimilar as possible, and they have their subdivisions and distinct lines already existing amongst themselves. If their views of defilement be true, I can easily show how much they themselves are defiled, because of the very intermixtures they pretend to be free from ; so that the idea of their possessing purity, and an undefiled position, is only a dream, and is as wild and puerile a notion as could fill the mind of any.

The difficulty with many brethren upon this question, has not been because of an absence of desire to exercise fit and proper discipline in the church, but how to judge matters apart from personal knowledge, and in the midst of much conflicting testimony ; and where this information is possessed, differences of judgment have arisen as to Bethesda, on the subject of ecclesiastical discipline. Some, determined at all cost and risk, to pursue their own hasty and independent line, pass over the faith and consciences of many beloved brethren who differ with them, and thus make havoc of the church, by enforcing their own judgment upon Bethesda as a test and a bond for the communion of saints.

UNITY.

Psalm cxxxiii. "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

Rom. xii. 5. "So we being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."

xv. 5. "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus, that ye may with one mind glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus."

1 Cor. xii. 24, 25. "But God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked : that there should be no schism in the body."

Ephes. iv. 3. "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Phil. iii. 16, "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."

i. 27. "That ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel."

1 Peter, iii. 8. "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous."

John, xiii. 35. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

xvii. 20, 21. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

These exhortations are so plain, that he who runs may read; yet we have arrived at days when the most palpable truths are either slighted or evaded. Unity is of God; discord and division are of Satan; and, according to apostolic judgment, express the sad symptoms of a carnal state. The more we partake of the Spirit of Jesus, the more true unity we shall enjoy; whereas division prevails where the flesh does. We should ever remember that the Father loves the saint as he does Jesus, John, xvii. 23; and that Jesus loves the saint as the Father loves Him, John, xv. 9. To touch one of them is to touch the apple of his eye. The 17th of John seems to be now either a forgotten or a slighted scripture; indeed, I was told the other day that it does not belong to this dispensation; and such are the sentiments creeping in through the exclusionists. One of them, who

had been most graciously helped by brethren in times of much difficulty, informed me that he had been brought to see that the present snare amongst us was,—loving the brethren more than Christ! I am at as great a loss to discover upon what other principle than love to Christ he was so nourished and succoured, as I am to discover where brotherly love is said in scripture to dishonour Christ. I thought it flowed from the love of Jesus as a necessary fruit. Yet, I am not surprised at anything being advanced, when theories are allowed to take the place of scripture in the mind, and where the independent actings of the Spirit are set up as rules for saints, and pleaded for when scripture is demanded.

DIVISIONS AND SEPARATIONS.

1 Cor. i. 10. “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you.”

iii. 3. “For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men?”

Rom. xvi. 17. “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.”

Jude, 19. “These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.”

Not only have we the fullest and plainest scriptures enforcing unity, but we have the judgment of the Holy Ghost thus recorded upon the sin of separations and divisions. The causers of division are to be regarded as a plague spot,—*the doctrine of the apostle being emphatically, union*: division would be directly contrary to the doctrine.

It is interesting to trace the various notices on the spirit of unity, which the apostle makes in Rom. xvi., of the va-

rious *graces* in the saints, closing his praises with these remarkable words; "Salute one another with an holy kiss." "The churches of Christ salute you;" and then, pressing his solemn admonition to mark and avoid dividers. Some affirm that the offending party is guilty of the division, and not the person who separates; which can only be justly regarded as an effort to avoid the force of scripture, and is a mere screen to cover the offence, and a speculation.

Let the condition of the churches be what it may, I repeat, the apostle never separated from nor divided saints; all his efforts were within the body; it was there he fought against Satan and the works of the flesh, if, by any means, he might save some. In this way he showed his love and care for the sheep of Christ, and not by withdrawing from them, to give them over to the wolf; had he done otherwise, it would have been the forfeiture of his apostleship,—the proof of his failure in the grace of Christ, and of his power in the Spirit of God.

To cast out brethren, and to say while doing so,—“let God be glorified,” is an old leaven. It is easy to cover over any improper course, with holy and sacred professions; but those who will pause and judge impartially for themselves, will not be easily taken by the mere sound of words.

Since writing the foregoing, a tract, of early date, entitled, “The Zeal of Jehu,” and printed at Plymouth, fell into my hands. It is an important one for our times, full of savour and godly discernment, and a sample of brethren’s former views. In page 8, Jehu and Elijah are thus contrasted.—

“Jehu, like a wily politician, rested satisfied with that reformation which satisfied the exigencies of the times; but Elijah, the real reformer (for he shall restore all things), must have the altar of Jehovah raised as the centre of *Israel’s*

unity—of the *twelve* tribes and not of the *ten*; and the heart of the children turned back to the fathers. Jehu, as a reformer, attacks the immediate evil and is satisfied with removing this; not looking back to the covenant of Jehovah with the fathers, nor forward to the purpose of God as to Israel,—not in its divided state, but in its oneness; for the object of the faith of Israel as to blessing is, “our twelve tribes;” and any measure of reformation which did not take in that object as its guide, would always stop short of God’s measure.”

This is precisely the objection of many to the exclusive movement,—it is a reformation without unity,—it does not take in the blessing of the *twelve tribes*,—of the whole church, and must stop short of God’s measure. In page 9 are these remarkable words. “It is far more easy with the Eagle eye of self-interest to detect and expose a thousand faults, than for a man in any one thing to deny himself. But unless the zeal be according to knowledge, it will just end where the zeal of Jehu ended,—*in cutting off.*” And such is the sad termination of those whose zeal has ended in the cutting off of the brethren. Page 11,—“The zeal of the prophets of the Lord was according to knowledge. We do not, therefore, find any self-complacency in exposing or denouncing evil.” Would that we could say so of our reformers.

“Surely, brethren, we have watchfully to guard against such zeal as Jehu exhibited. There is nothing easier than to detect inconsistencies, and to inveigh against them; and this can be done by the light of our own understandings, quite apart from the Spirit of Christ. It is not the way of His Spirit merely to expose evil, or to draw away from evil by exposing it, but by the setting forth of the attractiveness of good. Nothing is more injurious to our own souls, than the habit of searching out and exposing evil in the church, and

then in self-complacency attempting to remedy it. It always leads to a false estimate of ourselves, by making us forget that we have been implicated in the evil, and that it is chargeable on ourselves as well as on others; for the body of Christ cannot suffer as a whole, without our being affected by it."

"There is the one hope of our calling to be realized in God's own time. But the present power of that hope is to draw the saints together, because it is an unselfish hope. It leaves no room for rivalry or emulation, neither for our plans or our wisdom; it is a thing settled in God's purpose."

Page 19 is also exceedingly appropriate for our present warning and instruction. "He calls individuals to hear the voice of the Shepherd, and to follow him. He sets before them the hope of the glory, and there are they attracted together. And thus being gathered into unity by God himself, and not by any self-willed association, as it is a unity of truth and not of convenience, there is blessing. And among many other blessings, there is this one; to provoke unto love and good works, and to exhort one another, and so much the more as they see the day approaching. They are bound together by obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, with an open door before them, so that there is no hindrance for their walking on in the path of obedience when they have ascertained it. They have settled nothing but to believe, to obey, to follow, and to rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is their liberty—the liberty of serving him and following him in his ways. This liberty, human arrangement invariably hinders; and the trials of a great many very dear saints arise from this, that rules of human prescription prevent their obedience to Christ, as much as the calves at Bethel and Dan prevented those of the kingdom of Israel from obeying and worshipping God.

It is not the zeal of the reformer which is needed, but the humble and contrite spirit, trembling at God's word. It is not the ability to detect and expose inconsistencies in others, but the spirit which maketh quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord, which really worketh unto profit. It is not to attack the evil which exists, with ever so fervid a zeal, but an object to look to, sustaining and purifying the soul, which leads into profitable service."

Mr. Darby's tract on discipline also contains important instruction. "The character of discipline as *masters* we have not at all. Though influenced by love to maintain righteousness, and stimulated to a jealous watchful care one over another, we must ever remember that after all, "to his own master" our brother "standeth or falleth," Rom. xiv. 4. Love alone guides it, and the service of love displays it—(page 4). It would be a most awful thing if it were necessary to bring every evil into public. Charity covers a multitude of sins—(page 6). *The great body of discipline ought to be altogether aimed at hindering excommunication—the putting a person out—*(page 9). *If the conscience of the body is not brought up to what it acts to—the point of purging itself by the act of excommunication, I do not see what good is done, it is merely making hypocrites of them.*" This is precisely my view of what is effected by this exclusive movement. They are made hypocrites of,—for nine tenths cannot give any satisfactory reason for their course; and are found, in the main, in entire ignorance of the real matters at issue in this painful controversy. In page 7, Mr. Darby thus writes. "All *discipline until the last act is restorative.*" The **act** of putting outside, of excommunication, is not, properly speaking, discipline; but the saying that discipline is ineffective, and there is an end of it; the church says, I can do no more. Mr. Darby's

view is, that no discipline can be exercised upon rejected persons; in a word, they are to be dealt with as though they were heathens.

Mr. Darby retires summarily by his circular from communion with Bethesda, and from all who receive from thence, without further notice; and this he does in opposition to his plain teaching, as we see in his tract—(page 7).

“The question, whether I can sit down with this or that person who is within, never arises. A person staying away from communion because of another, of whom he does not think well, being there, is a most extraordinary thing; he is excommunicating himself for another’s sake. “For we, being many, are one bread (loaf), and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.” 1 Cor. x. 17. If I stay away, I am saying that I am not a christian, because another has gone wrong. That is not the way to act. There may be steps to pursue; but it is not to commit the folly of excommunicating myself, lest a sinner should intrude.”

And in page 11;—“It is a terrible thing to hear sinners talking about judging another sinner, but a blessed thing to see them exercised in conscience about sin come in among themselves. It must be in grace. I no more dare act, save in grace, than I could wish judgment to myself.—“Judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” Mat. vii. 1, 2. If we go to exercise judgment, we shall get it.”

The unity of saints was so strongly held by brethren in former times, that Mr. Darby, in his reply to Mr. Kelly, (page 62) says, “*we do then receive, on the one great truth of Christ’s salvation, all that through divine grace, believing it, are converted to God.*” Page 63, you say,—“Would you receive a Roman Catholic?” If a Roman Catholic really extolled

Jesus as a Saviour, and his one sacrifice of himself as the sole putting away of sin, he would have ceased to hold the error and delusion by which the enemy has misled some souls, who are, I trust, precious to Jesus. He would have ceased to be a Roman Catholic, in the evil sense of the word ; and on these terms only could he be with us. I repeat, then, *we receive all that are on this foundation, and put away all error by the word of God, and the help of his own blessed, ever living, and ever present Spirit.*

I have assumed throughout, that the meetings of brethren, as originally constituted, were according to scripture ; and that there was therefore an open door to remedy any and every wrong, which plainly is not the case with the several systems which were left ; *hence the call for separation from such bodies.* The presence of the Holy Ghost in the body as relied on by brethren, it was supposed ensured a remedy at all times within, they being in a position where He could freely act, which would render all division in future improper and unnecessary. With such thoughts I still agree ; and still, by God's grace, look to the presence of the Holy Ghost to put away all error, without making division in the church, retiring from the Lord's people, or giving them carelessly over to be scattered and injured by the wolf. And further, I would shudder at the idea of placing any test of communion before saints ; whether it be a Baptist question, a Bethesda question, or any other question. I feel increasingly that, to put any other test, save simple faith in Jesus, before saints, is putting a yoke upon disciples, and causing division in the church. Jesus carries the lambs in his arms, and receives the weakest into his fold, or he would not be the Great Shepherd and Bishop of the flock of God. His heart and his grace are alike too wide and expansive to admit the miserable tests of sectarianism.

I have abstained from entering into the points of objection taken against Bethesda, which would be an endless as well as an unprofitable inquiry. I spent several months over it. The most of the charges I found to be either false or highly exaggerated; and though I made diligent search, I could neither find false doctrine nor guilty conduct in the body, so as to warrant the excommunication of some 600 saints, and of all who would receive them. I don't pretend either to justify, or to apologize for, all the actings of Bethesda; they have their own judgment, and to their own master they stand or fall. This, I can plainly see, that their opponents are prepared to show judgment without mercy, and that they carefully conceal or deny all that Bethesda has done to purge itself of Newtonian doctrines and followers.

Mr. Craik's expressions on the Lord's humanity have offended many; he has been charged with several which he never used; and what he does confess to, when placed alongside his other views of Christ, go far to relieve one's mind as to his unhappy and unwise illustrations. I strongly dislike them; and yet they are far less objectionable than many which I have read, in writings of some of the most approved servants of Christ of former and present times. I have no doubt that the views put forth by Mr. Craik are identical with those of the church at large; so that to cast out so beloved a brother, and such a true servant of Christ, for his illustrations, in principle amounts to the cutting off of the whole church of God. To consent to such an enormous demand, would be impossible for any who took the scriptures for their guide. And surely some mercy ought to be afforded to those who cannot consent to the extent of interminable division and confusion so peremptorily demanded. It is only of late that the attention of brethren has been particularly directed to

the subject of the Lord's humanity; and many of their former statements they are now correcting, and that while they are dogmatising over others. Division took place at Plymouth before Mr. Newton's doctrines were discovered. Mr. Darby's circular, which called for separation from Bethesda, does not even refer to false doctrine being held by any there, but finds fault because Plymouth persons were received, and that there was danger of Newton's doctrine finding through them, a place at Bethesda. The letter of the ten, and Mr. Craik's sentiments on the Lord's humanity, appeared after the circular came out, so that separation from Bethesda was called for by Mr. Darby, independently of any of these grounds. And yet these are the reasons now prominently given to sanction the present division and separation.

While not pretending to understand Mr. Darby's ambiguous strictures, given in his circular upon Mr. Craik, in relation to his sympathy with some of Mr. Newton's views, he distinctly says,—“I have no reason to say that he is not sound in the faith.” Mr. Darby's call for separation is as contradictory as his strictures are ambiguous; for he plainly says that he “would receive from Bethesda *exceptional cases of ignorance of what had passed.*” I am certain that even now nine out of ten are ignorant of what had passed, and would be admissible accordingly. *His closing words omit the exception altogether.* “For my part, I should neither go to Bethesda in its present state, nor while in that state go where persons from it were knowingly admitted.”

Our present sin and snare are emphatically, *questions*. Those which are now introduced, the more they are agitated the more will confusion increase, and truth be departed from. Who can solve the Lord's humanity,—or who can understand it? It is for faith and worship, and not for speculation

x a mistake. Mr Darby's circular was subsequent to this letter.

or mental disquisition; it has its complex character, and often apparently so oppositely, that to seek to separate, reconcile, or reduce to a system, is to confound the whole, and to depart from a scriptural and safe view of it. It is a subject, the more the intellect has had to do with, the more heresies have arisen. Let us humbly believe that He was a real man, of the seed of David, had a true substantial humanity, and passed through actual death of his own will, and yet caused by wicked hands. DEFILEMENT is another question; and where shall we find the end of this either;—where does it begin, and where terminate,—how many forms and ramifications has it? Can we expect to move a step in this world of contamination, or enjoy association with any set of christians, and not be conscious of a defiling communication? Plain and obvious cases of evil are to be rejected. 1 Cor. v. But who can purge away the endless ramifications of secret defilement? They are for the purging and the touch of the Heavenly Priest—but not for our rude hands. Is there not a danger of being wholly lost in the unhealthy absorption of questions, of each forming sects and parties, according to his peculiar view and interpretation, and of having the mind so full and overcharged with views and interpretations, that everything besides is made subordinate to the prominent idea.

Excommunication seems now, in the minds of many, to be the only way to deal with evil or improprieties in the church. So heartless and impatient have many become, that the moment they have ascertained that anything wrong has happened, the next thought is,—“I must leave, or cut off.” And this, while assuming a very high tone of righteousness, or of communion, really shows a very sickly, unholy, and impatient state of soul; amounting very much to this, that so long as we please we admit the family bond, and break it at our

convenience. Every effort should be aimed at hindering excommunication; for God hates putting away.

In conclusion, I would say that all our present sorrow has arisen because of departure from original principles. Let us humble ourselves, and at once return to them, and division shall no more appear in our midst. Let us bear all things, and endure all things, and seek to lord it over none. Let us walk together, as far as we have attained; and where we be otherwise minded, let us wait on God to reveal more of his mind to us. Let us endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit, and to labour together in the Lord in the spirit of forbearance against our common enemy. Let us not judge our brethren who differ with us, as though they sought to depreciate Christ, or were careless about his person or his glory. Those whom we condemn may stand more highly approved than ourselves, when before the throne. And let us ever remember, "For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth."

The times we live in are perilous and difficult. The path of saints is surely not to follow men, nor believe all they say or would enforce; but to try all things by THE WORD, and to obey none, save as that word plainly directs; nor yet to believe accusations against beloved brethren—though preferred by those of note, without hearing and judging for ourselves, according to the question asked by Nicodemus to the Chief Priests and Pharisees, when they would cast out Jesus;—"Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" John vii. 51.

The manuscript of this Tract was given me to read by the brother who wrote it; and as it appears to be a plain and simple statement of the case, with his permission I do not hesitate humbly and earnestly to request from my dear brethren a candid and prayerful perusal. It is my matured and solemn conviction that declension, to a very sad extent, has set in, in most, if not all the gatherings of the Lord's people; and that the advocacy of views and opinions, such as are exposed in this tract, would not, and could not have been tolerated, had this not been the case.

That the church of God is deeply indebted to these beloved brethren and servants of Christ, for the truth they have expounded, and the devotedness they have manifested, is gratefully acknowledged; and it is deeply painful to have to find fault with their present conduct and their teaching. But that both are at variance with what was previously held and taught, must surely be plain to every unbiassed and unprejudiced christian. That much of their previous conduct and their teaching was according to truth, and of God, I dare not doubt. To disagree with them now is felt by me and by thousands to be sorrowful indeed: to expound that difference to the saints at large, appears now to be faithfulness to the sheep,—to the Great Shepherd,—and the beloved brethren themselves, who have resisted and rejected all remonstrance, and prayerful continued and godly effort to set right that which is so glaringly wrong. If an expression or word in this tract is unnecessarily sharp or unlovely, I am sure the

writer would, as I do, ask the Lord's pardon, and the saints' also, and the forgiveness of those dear brethren, who are not the less dear because of the painful necessity of exhibiting their present inconsistent and unscriptural tenets and conduct. How earnestly we pray for, and how gladly we should hail any acknowledgment of error, and any confession of evil, is known to the Searcher of Hearts. How rejoiced we should be to wash their feet, or sit there to receive instruction,—were the true nobility of mind induced which would frankly acknowledge the mistakes committed, and the wrong done, HE also knows.

I could appeal on my knees, and with many tears, to the hearts of our brethren—whose conduct is complained of. I remember their deep reverence and true affection for Christ,—their self-denying labours of love for His name's sake; and I would entreat them to consider the present condition of the church at large,—I would remind them of the precious truth God has in his grace committed to their keeping; the value of this truth to the saints, especially in these evil days, I would beseech them to remember, that our present evil condition as gatherings of the Lord's people, is not irremediable; that while all the various sects and denominations of the day are so fixed in their evil position, that to get rid of it, the position must be left: the gatherings of the Lord's people, as such, have only to be humbled and penitent on account of their mistakes and misconduct—to return unto the Lord, and he will surely return unto them. Let us be jealous for His glory, and not our own views; love his saints, because they are His, and not for what they are in themselves; and seek grace to be enabled to bear and forbear one another in love. And I would humbly ask my beloved brethren what has been gained by all the divisions they have made? Is not all confidence

gone,—chief friends separated,—the truth damaged,—the Holy Ghost grieved, and our God dishonoured?

I do not thus address others as though I were personally free. The Lord knows with what bitterness of heart I have to mourn over my own failings and evil; and I desire to walk softly, and to take the blame and shame where alone it can be remedied. But I trust, through His grace, I can say, my love for the saints has not declined; and that I desire to live only to be Christ's servant to them, in any little measure which he graciously vouchsafes me.

That our God may in his boundless grace, induce our beloved brethren, where they are wrong, to retrace their steps, and enable us all to see whence we are fallen; to repent and do our first works, should surely be the godly desire of every christian into whose hands this Tract may come.

W. YAPP

Hereford,

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