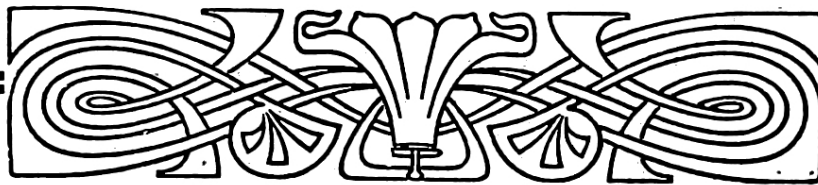


WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE



BY

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*A Reply to Dr. BLACK on "The
Flymouth Brethren" in the "Record,"
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FIFTH EDITION, *revised.*

NOTE TO FOURTH EDITION.

That four editions of this pamphlet have been called for in as many weeks, indicates, we think, considerable interest in the subject.

Our Critic assumes that the "recognized church" is all right, and that "brethren" in many things are all wrong. The true test of everything is the Word of God, and we earnestly invite the children of God in every system, to recognize its authority over the conscience, and act accordingly.

It is a small matter for us to be judged of men or by man's judgment, but when the truth of God is treated as being of less weight than the opinions of men it is time to protest.

It is not difficult to see whither Christendom is tending to-day. Modernism and infidelity are retailed from many of its pulpits: superstition and human merit from others. The vagaries of novelists, poets, and dramatists appear to many modern preachers, as worthy of more credence than the inspired Word of God.

The testimony borne by the "Free Church" of 1843 is about to be stultified by their followers. Anglicanism is angling for Non-Conformity, and will doubtless capture it. *Rome is behind all*, and "Babylon" (Rev. xvii.) before it.

Instead of the testimony of "brethren" being "now uncalled for," there never was more need to heed the exhortation of 2 Cor. vi., "**Come out from among them and be ye separate.**" The path of separation is no easy path, and a man's foes are often they of his household. But the time has come for *every* Christian who would be true to his Master, to part company with any and every system which either teaches, or allows, the Christ-dishonouring doctrines mentioned on page 6 of this pamphlet.

NOTE TO FIFTH EDITION.

"In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of earth; and some to honour and some to dishonour. If a man therefore **purge himself from these**, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use and prepared unto every good work" (ii. Tim. ii. 21).

"Let every one that nameth the name of **the Lord** depart from iniquity" (ver. 19).

WHAT SAITH

THE SCRIPTURE.

DR. BLACK of "Free St. Georges, Edinburgh" criticises, in the columns of "*The Missionary Record*," a company of his fellow-Christians whom he calls the 'Plymouth Brethren.'

Among other things, he stigmatises them as being "typical hardshells"—"narrow and unbrotherly"—"having no separate, ordained, educated, and maintained ministry or clergy"—"refusing fellowship with any person who holds evil doctrine," and many other things they do which seems to grieve the good Doctor sorely.

I shall come back to these charges presently, but would say, in the first place, that the title he uses is not of our choosing. I am not a "Plymouth" brother for the simple reason that I am not in Plymouth; I am in Edinburgh and therefore, an Edinburgh brother. We recognize *every* fellow believer as a "brother"—Dr. Black included, and we have the highest possible authority for so doing—even that of the Lord Himself, who said, "One is your Master, even Christ and all ye are brethren" (Matt. xxiii. 8). Can Dr. Black say as much for the title of the sect he is among? Whether he can or not I shall extend the courtesy to it which it is entitled to, that is of referring to it by the name of its own choosing, which is the "United Free Church of Scotland." It may interest him to know that the "brethren" are referred to in the New Testament some 220 times—the United Free Church of Scotland, *never once*.

“Brethren” recognize only one Church, which Scripture calls the “Church of God,” and they gather to the name of the LORD JESUS, believing that His Name is both authoritative and sufficient. They refuse all other denominational titles according to His own Word—“where two or three are gathered together in MY NAME, there am I in the midst” (Matt. xviii. 20). We meet to celebrate His dying love every Lord’s Day according to His own request and the practice of the New Testament Church, and we intend to do so “till He come,” whether Dr. Black likes it or no. We may plead that at least, we have sufficient affection for our absent Lord to fulfil His dying request, and this, I judge, is the first essential to progress in divine things.

That there have been “internal dissensions” we regret and deplore, but are we alone in this matter? It is estimated that there have been or are, some one thousand fragments in Christendom. “Brethren” are responsible for some ten or twelve; is Dr. Black and company responsible for the other nine hundred and eighty-eight? And if so, should they who live in glass-houses throw stones? Whether he is or not, he has only to look back over the history of the “national church” since 1740 to find “internal dissensions.” No doubt, he knows more about “seceding churches” than I do, but I have read of “Burghers” and “Anti-Burghers” in 1747, “Relief” churches in 1760, “Old-Light Burghers” in 1799, and “Old-Light Anti-Burghers” in 1806. In addition, have there not been Morrisonions, Irvingites, Sandemanians, Glassites, and many others? Have we not heard of “Wee Frees” and “U.P.’s”? Did not the “Free Church of Scotland” split off from the

“Established Church” in 1843, and has history not recorded for Dr. Black’s instruction that these last two parties “had as little to do with each other as the Jews and the Samaritans.”

He talks much and largely of “the church,”—sometimes “a church,” sometimes “the church,” sometimes “my church” (could Egotism go farther ?) it is a fair question, which of all these fragments is “the Church ?” “Brethren” have not so learned Scripture, and so far they have mercifully been preserved from trying to *adorn* their “dissensions” with names that savour more of earth than heaven.

But it is objected to us that we are “typical hardshells.” What that may mean I do not know. I am not so familiar with the “slang” dictionary, as Dr. Black seems to be, and I decline to follow him into the mud.

Then, “They will have no fellowship at all with any person who holds evil doctrine—‘evil doctrine’ being, of course, doctrine with which they do not agree, and of which they alone are the judges.”

Now what precisely does this objection stand for ? Is the innuendo that “brethren” pronounce “good doctrine” to be “evil doctrine,” or does it mean that good doctrine is such a difficult thing to test that even the “educated ministry” is sometimes at a loss. It was not so in New Testament times. I find that the elect lady (see 2 John 11) was expected, and held responsible to know the “doctrine of Christ.” “If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed.” How does the “United Free Church” stand in relation to this Scripture ? Have we not, in

recent times, seen its pulpit opened to the leader of the Anti-Christian Modernism of America—a system whose cardinal points are, a *denial* of the Inspiration of Scripture—the Deity of Christ—His Virgin Birth—His sinless life—Atoning death—Bodily resurrection, and Personal coming again. Are these seven things good doctrine or not ? But to come nearer home, have we not heard of a well-known professor of the then “ Free Church ” who taught that a man might believe that Christ still lay buried in a “ lone Syrian tomb ” and yet be a Christian ! But the inspired apostle says:—“ If Christ be not raised your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins ” (1 Cor. xv. 17). These two statements clearly conflict, which of them is right ? Can a man be a Christian and still be “ in his sins ” ? Is this good doctrine ? Thank God, “ brethren ” have a final court of appeal in the “ Scripture of Truth ” to the “ Authority ” of which they bow, and they need no “ creeds,” nor “ church standards ”—“ Thus saith the Lord,” is enough for every reverent mind.

But “ they are essentially Independents ”—They are *not*. They know their Bibles too well, and this also applies to the charge that they are “ Calvinists ” and “ Baptists.” The ordinance of Baptism they practice, and the spiritual meaning of it they teach in a way few do; but they recognize the essential *interdependence* of all saints as members of the body of Christ, according to the Scripture—“ the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee ” (1 Cor. xii. 21).

Again,

“ They have no . . . educated or ordained ministry or clergy . . . to conduct the worship of the congregation.”

And as this seems to be the head and front of our offending (for the doctor expends the half of his space and the whole of his eloquence on it) it may be well to say a few words in defence.

First then, the Greek word *Κληρος*, from which we get *clergy*, as it is used in the Greek Testament (1 Peter v. 3), is applied to ALL God's people. By what right then, do a small company of men to-day, arrogate this title to themselves, and in addition, add to it the word "reverend" which is only once used in Scripture and there applied to the Divine Majesty of God Himself?—"Holy and reverend is His Name" (Psalm cxi. 9). The Holy Spirit, through the apostle, after correcting, regulating and instructing the Corinthians (1 Cor. xiv.) as to the divine order of God's assembly, tells them that "God is not the Author of confusion, but of peace, as in all assemblies of the saints" (verse 33). It seems however, that now-a-days, if we are to have "decency and order" it can only be ensured at the expense of *silencing every member of the Church except the "minister"*! Dr. Black does not "deny the Holy Spirit" (for which we are thankful), but clearly he cannot trust Him to maintain "decency and order." He evidently thinks that it is safer for the Holy Spirit to trust Dr. Black, than for Dr. Black to trust the Holy Spirit.

We could gather from 1 Cor. xiv. that there was sometimes disorder in that assembly, and knowing something of their past history in a godless world we should be surprised if it had not been so. But the apostle does not put them right by "ordaining" or telling them to "ordain" a "clergyman" to take the chair and "conduct

the worship of the congregation." No, he brought them back to *God's order* by putting them in subjection to the Holy Spirit of God who dwelt among them—"Ye may all prophesy," he says "one by one, that all may learn and that all may be comforted" (verse 31). "Let all things be done decently and in order" (verse 40).

Any order that subverts God's order, how orderly soever it may look in the eyes of men, is but disorder and unbelief.

The wide—I had almost said, wild—statement, that "their meetings often suffer from . . . lack of order and seemliness" remains to be *proved*. The writer has been at over 1,800 worship meetings on Lord's Day mornings and so far he has not seen it. Has Dr. Black seen it? If not, why does he say so? Is it either kind or christian to publish such a statement without proof attached?

But we "are uneducated." Well, we may not have the wisdom of this world which aims at reaching "the top of the tree." The Master did not encourage self-exaltation. There is a "wisdom of this world which is foolishness with God." When you have finished with that you begin to realize the truth and value of the word, "Learn of ME, for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. xi. 28).

But will an "educated ministry" necessarily result from saturating the mind with the moral filth so characteristic of Greek and Roman literature, infusing into it the infidelity of the French encyclopedists, and finally precipitating it into the neology of German Rationalism, with just enough Bible thrown in to show up the mistakes of Moses and our Lord's ignorance of the "fact" (!) that Moses did not write the Pentateuch!

May God pardon this reproduction of the blasphemy of "educated" men of profane minds. If this is an "educated ministry" we *have not* got it. No, thank God, we have not—not that kind. We don't want it.

I am not pleading for an *ignorant* ministry. No sane man would. That there are teachers among us possessing a *Christian* education of the highest kind, no one acquainted with the literature of "brethren" will deny. There they will find godly Scripture exposition—reverent, scholarly and edifying—the "sincere milk of the Word" for babes, and "strong meat" for those of mature age. But in it they will find neither the infidel folly of the Evolutionist, who would put the Creator out of His own world, nor yet the daring impiety of the Higher Critic, who pronounces the Word of God to be a thing of shreds and patches, written, no one knows when, and for what purpose no one knows why.

Then it seems we ought to have an "ordained" ministry. But which of all the modern forms of ordination "must we have"? Is it to be the Papal sanction of the Roman Catholic—the Apostolic Succession of the Episcopalian—the Synodical procedure of the Presbyterian, or the Democratic form of the Independent? Here indeed, is a labyrinthine maze with no Ariadne clue to guide you. "Brethren" are wise, they do not enter.

Yet we are told that we

"*must admit* that within the earliest days the new church was led to appoint officers for its work and worship... A formless and leaderless mob could accomplish nothing... an amorphous church is a contradiction in terms"—and more to the same effect.

Think of it! The Church at Pentecost with its Head on High—the risen Lord, controlling and directing—the Holy Spirit on earth indwelling, inspiring, energising, and uniting together every member—this would be but “a formless and leaderless mob” unless they “ordained for themselves,” as an additional help, “officers for their work and worship.

And this from the pulpit of “Free St. George’s!” And we are told we “must admit this.” Well, we shall be quite willing to admit it when it has been *proven*. Meantime, it has only been *asserted*.

No, the “young Church” was neither “amorphous” nor acephalous: it had both a determinate body and a living Head. But the fact is, this young church never ordained anybody. There is not a word of Scripture to show that they did. They never had authority to do so. Clear thinking here on two things will greatly help us:

1. Elders and deacons for local office were ordained (or appointed) by apostles or apostolic delegates. Never by any one else.

2. Evangelists, pastors and teachers were ordained by the Lord Himself. Never by anyone else (Rom. xii., 1 Cor. xii., Eph. iv.).

These last are spoken of as “gifts” given by the Head for the edification of the members of the body, and these we recognize as guides already ordained by the Lord Himself.

Christendom has been taught that you cannot have Christian worship without a “minister,” but the truth is, you cannot have Christian worship without a *priest*, and *all* believers *are* *priests*. Scripture says so. They are “an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to

God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter ii. 5), and again, "By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His Name" (Heb. xiii. 15). But all Christians are not only "holy priests;" they are also "royal priests" (1 Peter ii. 9), "to show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." "Within the veil," we lift up the graces and glories of Christ in the presence of God. "Without the camp" we lift up the graces and glories of Christ in the presence of men.

All Christians are priests, but *all are not exercising their priesthood*. Unspiritual condition may hinder some, "ecclesiastical order," or rather disorder, may hinder others, but if so, they are the losers thereby.

"Rome," Dr. Black continues, "never unchurched people more intolerently than one set of "brethren" unchurched another."

Rome *excludes from salvation* all outside her pale. Do "brethren"? But can either Rome or "brethren" hold a candle to Dr. Black in this matter? With one sweep of his pen he has "unchurched" EVERY set of "brethren." We are ALL "outside the sphere of a recognized evangelical church."

Recognized by *whom*, I wonder?

They put the man in the ninth chapter of John outside the "recognized church," and I think he was the gainer thereby. Outside he met the Lord.

The Doctor tells us that "Jesus said so plainly that He had 'other sheep not of this flock.'" *The Lord Jesus never said so*. At least if He did, it is not recorded in my Bible. It is a

serious thing, either willingly, or negligently, to misquote the Lord's own words, especially when that misquotation brings out a meaning exactly opposite to Scripture. Let the reader turn to John x. 1-16, and judge for himself.

Well, well, they have put us out of the synagogues and doubtless the time is coming when he that killeth us will think that he doeth God service. It seems that already

“We have not a leg to stand on.”

We are not complaining. We are not “assailing the Church,” for in spite of the Doctor's “narrowness, unbrotherliness, and exclusiveness,” shown towards us in the *Record* article, we are still in the church of God. We are a feeble folk. We are not rich and increased with goods. We have no beautiful Carnegie organs: no paid choirs: no stately temples: no church bazaars: no raffles: no whist drives: no amateur theatricals: no select dances: no “philosophically, psychologically, and critically” educated “clergymen”: no highly paid “ministry” reaching out as fast as they can for the “top of the tree.”

But nevertheless, we do have TWO good, sound substantial “legs” to stand on.

The one is the sure WORD OF GOD for our instruction in righteousness and the other is the WITNESS of His Holy Spirit to the sufficiency of the NAME of the LORD JESUS.

Through grace we are endeavouring to mould both our walk and our worship according to that WORD, and we trust the same grace will preserve us from either denying that NAME, or linking it up with anything that is dishonouring to the cause of Christ either in doctrine or practice.