

Very good  
11.8.57

~~W. H. W. W. W.~~

~~W. H. W.~~

~~Theodore I. Wilson~~

~~19-1-24~~

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or nothing; observed strictly the weekly fasts too. I went to my clergyman always if I wished to take the Sacrament, that he might judge of the matter. I held apostolic succession fully, and the channels of grace to be there only. I held thus Luther and Calvin and their followers to be outside. I was not their judge, but I left them to the uncovenanted mercies of God. I searched with earnest diligence into the evidences of apostolic succession in England, and just saved their validity for myself and my conscience. The union of Church and State I held to be Babylonish, that the Church ought to govern itself, and that she was in bondage, but was the Church."<sup>1</sup>

I doubt if Darby took orders in this state of mind. It is clear from his correspondence<sup>2</sup> that he passed through some great crisis of belief in 1825, and it is a plausible conjecture that a remarkable accession of spiritual light, as he deemed, led him to seek ordination. However that may be, Bellett considered him still "a very exact Churchman"; and in his first tract he takes his stand at the point where extreme Evangelicalism and extreme High Churchmanship join hands in the intensity of their common anti-Erastianism. This point remained throughout his life the pivot of Darby's ecclesiastical position.

The circumstances in which this paper appeared have been often described. The following account is taken from Professor Stokes' article.

<sup>1</sup> *Analysis of Newman's Apologia*, Edition 1891, pp. 3, 31.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters of J. N. D.*, p. 252.

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Letter to  
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p. 297  
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the same thing; for, instead of bringing them to graft them into the vine, the liberty and security of Christ, to pledge their souls to that which (if the civil Sovereign should choose wrong) would be Popery, and is in fact a denial of union with Christ being the vital principle and bond of the true Church, that general assembly and Church of the first born whose names are written in heaven, which *is* the true Church. . . . Here is true catholicity, and to affirm it of anything else is Popery, however modified."

By Darby's showing, these measures of his diocesan very effectually sacrificed the spiritual power of the Church of Ireland to its civil security. "I may mention," Darby writes thirty-eight years later, "that just at that time the Roman Catholics were becoming Protestants at the rate of 600 or 800 a week. The Archbishop (Magee) imposed, within the limits of his jurisdiction, the oaths of allegiance and supremacy; and the work everywhere instantly ceased."

The following paragraph from Darby's pamphlet may be quoted as being perhaps at once the most striking and the most representative of the position he took up against the great bulk of the Irish clergy.

"I quote one passage [from the Charge]: 'The Sovereign cannot prescribe in favour of a system, that maintains a spiritual supremacy independent of civil government.' There *is* a spiritual supremacy independent of civil government; the spiritual supremacy of Christ, of which the clergy are ministers—not an earthly dominion, but the very contrary. But when our Lord was brought before Pilate and charged with being a King, He did not affirm the harmlessness of His religion, by stating its amalgamation interests with the State, or that it was merely 'another aspect of the same body,' but unqualifiedly assented to the position 'witnessed a good confession,' that it *was* a kingdom, but not this world."

See also  
- letters  
Vol 1 p 397

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In this are Bellett did not actually meet late 1829 in the congregation because gathering see p 20 of this book

impression that that remark made on him, Bellett introduces Edward Cronin abruptly, and proceeds: "In a private room we had the Lord's Supper with, I believe, three others, while I was still going to Sanford Chapel, and John Darby was still in the County Wicklow as a clergyman."<sup>1</sup>

Darby had however, in 1828, published what passes with good right for "the Brethren's first pamphlet," under the title of *Considerations on the Nature and Unity of the Church of Christ*. It was not indeed the manifesto, as Mr. Miller supposed, of a "young community," for no community as yet existed. It was the expression of a tendency which, though rapidly coming to a head, was as yet a tendency only; and this is just as clear from internal as from external evidence. The tract contains some forcible passages, and attacks the existing order with a good deal of power; but it is strikingly lacking in definiteness of suggestion, and is plainly either the writing of a man who does not yet see his own way clearly, or of one who deliberately prefers to keep his counsel.

Something more will be said of this tract later on, but it is necessary in the meantime to bring up to date the story of the man by whose means a strong Nonconformist element was infused into the new movement.

Edward Cronin was, I understand, slightly Darby's junior. Professor Stokes states that he was a convert from Roman Catholicism. When he came as a medical student from the South of Ireland to Dublin for his health (about the year 1826, it is said), he belonged to the Independents, and was received to occasional communion by various dissenting churches. "This liberty was continued," he tells us, "till it was found

<sup>1</sup> The italics are mine.

Spirit, also seen by us very clearly. *Here Francis Hutchinson joined us, and as we were becoming numerous, offered us the use of his large room in Fitzwilliam Square.*" (Italics my own.)

This was apparently in November, 1829. Cronin furnishes a curious account of the attitude of his seniors.

"At this time dear J. G. Bellett and J. N. Darby were more or less affected by the general state of things in the religious world, but were unprepared to come out into entire separation. They looked suspiciously at our movements, feeling still able to attend and minister<sup>1</sup> in the Church of England, as well as to come occasionally to our little assembly."

This representation is largely borne out by Bellett's own language, as will shortly appear. It involves indeed no disparagement of Darby or Bellett, even from the point of view of the Brethren. It is quite as much the part of the simpler intellect as of the bolder spirit to move rapidly in times of change. But Darby seems always to have grudged Cronin his undoubted priority. Indeed, Darby never shone in any kind of relation of rivalry; and this accounts for his rather ungenerous reference to Cronin's claims. "Five of us," he writes, "met at Fitzwilliam Square—Bellett, Cronin, Hutchinson, the present Master Brooke, who was frightened away by Hutchinson, and myself. As Hutchinson had disputations, I proposed meeting next Sunday. We did, at H.'s house. Brooke did not come. I have read since that Cronin had already met with Wilson and some others, but they had broken up—of that I know nothing. I afterwards went down and worked at Limerick." Information being very accessible, Darby's contented ignorance about the beginnings of a movement that restored,

<sup>1</sup>The ministry must have been confined to Darby, as Bellett was a layman.

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as he thought, so vast a sweep of apostolic testimony to the heritage of the Church is not a little surprising. According to Cronin, as we have seen, his meeting never broke up at all. The spirit of this note of Darby's sheds a good deal of light on the strangely perverted accounts of the beginnings of Brethrenism that afterwards circulated in his particular section of the movement.

It is difficult to assign the meeting Darby mentions to its proper place in connexion with Bellett's detailed annals, as they may fairly be called; and we are not helped by Cronin's rigid abstinence from dates. It is probable that it is to be identified with the meeting that Miller places in the winter of 1827-8; but if so, Miller was wrong as to its character, which must have been casual and informal, and not, as he supposed, the stable outcome of special deliberation and prayer.

Cronin's story could scarcely have been broken up so as to end it with the close of 1828. It is from that point, however, that we must now resume the common history.

From his last visit to Dublin up to the time of his departure for Bagdad, in June, 1829, Groves does not seem to have been in contact with these embryonic Brethren. From a passage in one of his letters, to which further reference will be made, it may be inferred that he knew Darby's tract on the Nature and Unity of the Church, and sympathised with it; and it is certain from his subsequent history that he had become well acquainted with Darby in Dublin, and powerfully attracted by him. Throughout 1829 the companions he left behind were gradually working out the fruitful idea that he had propounded. Bellett gives an account of their progress, of which the accuracy may be gauged by the fearlessness of the detail,

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in His extraordinary operations, than in the working of those social elements which have no original connexion with the depravity of fallen man—in cooperation and subordination, in the economy of an ordered division of labour, in a variety of prudential arrangements, whether in the inward working of the Church or in its external operations. But it is not open to any one (be it observed in passing) to deny that the simplicity of Groves' faith, the depth of his humility, the energy and purity of his zeal, the fervour and comprehensiveness of his charity, have rarely been equalled in the Church of God.

For better or for worse, it gradually became the law of Brethrenism to disown all regularly constituted authority, all orderly arrangement, and all prudential provision even for emergencies that are bound to arise. How far a now somewhat prolonged experience yields a verdict favourable to such a procedure will perhaps appear in the course of this history.

Very closely linked with what might be called the "haphazardism" of the Brethren is their attitude towards the question of unfulfilled prophecy. Brethrenism may even be held to derive its very existence in part from the new prophetic studies to which the unsettlement of men's minds, consequent on the long agony of the Napoleonic wars, gave rise. Prophetic meetings were established in 1827 at Aldbury Park, Surrey, the seat of the well-known Henry Drummond. At these meetings Edward Irving took part, and to Aldbury Irvingism traces its rise. Lady Powerscourt attended these conferences, and "was so delighted with them that she established a similar series of meetings at Powerscourt House near Bray, in the County Wicklow, which for several years were presided over by the rector of the parish, the late Bishop Daly of Cashel. These meetings

"Aldbury"

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Yes. — see  
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almost incredible carelessness rather than of power.

Was it affectation? Probably such a term harsh to use in the case of a man of striking simplicity of character; but the negligence externals, of which this is only the culminating was perhaps adopted (if not deliberately, yet instinctively) as the fitting external form for the spirit of his life's mission.

Limerick was the scene of Darby's early work outside Dublin in behalf of the new cause "after July, 1830," as he says in a note appended to Bellett's narrative,<sup>1</sup> that Darby took his way to Oxford. Wigram, who was then at Balliol College, may have been the means of bringing Darby to Oxford. "Breaking of bread" had already begun. In the year 1831 [it should be 1830] I went to Oxford to call on Mr. Darby, "where many doors were open, and I found Mr. Wigram and Mr. Jarratt. Subsequently calling on Mr. F. Newman I met Mr. Newman, who asked me to go down to Plymouth, which I did. On arriving, I found in the house Captain Hailey, who was already preaching in the villages. We had several meetings, and ere long<sup>2</sup> began to break bread. Mr. Wigram began the work in London hereafter, but he dealt at Plymouth."

Such were the fair beginnings of several churches.

<sup>1</sup> Miller (p. 40) quotes from a letter of Darby's which the writer says "about the year 1831". This is incorrect for he called upon Newman during this visit, and Newman was at Balliol College.

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F.W. Newman

In his letter  
to Prof. Induct  
(see "letters"  
vol 2, p. 301),  
Darby says  
it was 1830.



destined to end sooner or later in misery and scandal. For the present, in the common glow of the new enthusiasm, all hearts blended, and latent rivalries were held in profound abeyance. Even the two brilliant and impetuous ecclesiastics, whose duel à l'outrance fifteen years later shattered the new community and scandalised Christendom, were cooperating with perfect harmony in laying the foundations of the vigorous and aggressive church that was to give its name ere long to the whole movement.

There is really no mystery about the term "Plymouth" Brethren. The Plymouth meeting was the first in England to be recognised as a meeting of Brethren. It had before long a membership of over a thousand, and it attracted the ministry of all the English leaders. Newton was there, whenever his Fellowship at Exeter College did not detain him in Oxford. Hall was resident there for a time. Wigram and Darby worked there frequently. The result was that "Plymouth Brethren" became an almost inevitable designation for the new sect in England. In Ireland, on the contrary, they were known as Darbyites, until the usage of the "predominant partner" at last prevailed.

Darby's letter introduces three men who afterwards played considerable parts in the story of Brethrenism. George Vicesimus Wigram, the twentieth child of Sir Robert Wigram, merchant and shipowner, of London and Wexford, was born in 1805. He came of a clever family, one of his brothers being fifth wrangler and vice-chancellor, and another sixth wrangler and Bishop of Rochester. For a short time he held a commission in the army. In 1824 a remarkable spiritual ecstasy left a deep and abiding impression on his life. This probably led to his abandoning the army, and entering at Queen's

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A younger man than either of these, but one who quickly took a place of influence second only to Darby's, was Benjamin Wills Newton. This distinguished theologian was born on the 12th of December, 1807, of a Quaker stock, and attained the age of nearly ninety-two. He was less than twenty-three when Darby arrived in Oxford. It has been constantly stated that he was in Holy Orders, but this was not the case. When he met Darby he had already relinquished on conscientious grounds all thought of ordination, and was thus prepared to adopt the new views on ministry and Church order. From this time until his secession from Brethrenism in 1847, he exercised his ministry steadily at Plymouth, except that for a few years, during which he held his Fellowship, Oxford claimed a certain portion of his time.

In 1832 the Brethren of Plymouth obtained a valuable recruit. J. L. Harris, perpetual curate of Plymstock, forsook the Church of England to unite himself with them. This excellent man, who married a daughter of Legh Richmond, was born about the year 1793. His presence greatly strengthened the infant community, whose first organ, *The Christian Witness*, was started under his editorship in 1834.

It seems then clear that Brethrenism in Plymouth had not an origin wholly independent of the movement in Dublin. A stronger case might be made out for the independence of the next centre at which we have to trace the origins. I refer to Bristol, where a powerful and peculiar phase of the movement, destined to a singularly stormy sequel, demands careful consideration.

The new principles were introduced at Bristol by one who may well be called the most illustrious man ever associated with the Brethren. The story of George

No. 10. The first editor was, B. Harris.

GROVES IN THE EAST

paring his conduct, even when we think it ill-judged and unfortunate, with what Brethrenism has too often exhibited, who can refrain from crying, *O si sic omnes!*

The mission to Bagdad, though almost barren of registrable results, is one of the most interesting episodes in the whole of our story. A year after Groves left England a party of seven started to join him. It consisted of Cronin (who had just become a widower), his mother and sister, Parnell, Newman, Hamilton (an Irish Brother), and Cronin's infant daughter. The party was detained for fifteen months at Aleppo. There Parnell married Miss Cronin, and lost her almost immediately by death. Hamilton returned to England, and scarcely had the little company at last succeeded in reaching Bagdad, in the early summer of 1832, when Mrs. Cronin also died.

It is an interesting fact that Wigram was only prevented at the last moment from joining this missionary band. That we thus get a list of almost all the names of men who had taken a leading part in the movement before 1830 is a striking proof, not only of the fervour of the zeal of the first Brethren, and of their readiness to stake everything on principles of action that may now appear to us rather visionary, but also of their superiority to any ambition to found a new sect. To follow Groves to Bagdad, on a mission that must be deemed singularly unpromising, was the prevailing passion in Dublin. If the little group there that furnished most of the makers of Brethrenism had the weakness of Quixotism, at least they had its strength and nobleness.

The zeal of the party was tried by heavy and protracted sorrow. When they reached Bagdad at last it was to enter a house of mourning. In March, 1831, the plague had broken out, and within two months more

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— George  
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P. 102

at Vevey "to break bread," held on a Monday, at which Nationalists and Dissenters united. "Very happy," is Darby's terse comment. "It is a beginning."

It was in fact the beginning of a great deal. Following English precedent, Darby made the study of prophecy the pivot of his work; and his delineations of millennial glory dazzled the minds of his hearers. There existed in Vaud a certain religious *malaise*, of which the growth of Methodism in an otherwise uncongenial soil had been a symptom. The Free Church had yielded less satisfaction than its promoters had hoped, and the minds of its adherents were prepared to hail the charms with which the certain future—doubtless it was said, the near future—was invested in Darby's prophetic dissertations. He was never "weary," Herzog tells us, "of urging on his hearers this decisive word: 'Prophecy tends to snatch us from the present evil age; that is its principal effect'."

Darby was in some sense the guest of the Dissenters, but he let it be known from the outset that he would make no difference between them and the "Nationalists". The result was that his meetings were largely attended by the members of both Churches, and he pursued a policy that may be variously characterised according to the point of view taken. He would doubtless have said that he spoke the word, as his hearers were able to bear it.

"Persons who had for a long time followed his lectures affirmed that he preached nothing but the truths of salvation, and never allowed himself a word that was hostile to the existing Church. He delivered the discourses of which we have just spoken, equally on Sundays and on other days, either in the place while the principle of leaving their churches, placing the others in a dilemma how to recognise this body, meanwhile they look on." Surely, in charity to Darby's memory, the editors of his correspondence might have omitted this letter from the collection.

No. 46  
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L'église libre  
Vaudoise was  
not founded  
until 1847 -  
see Resnet.

shake hands with his old friend.<sup>1</sup> "Since then," writes Darby, "the letters were constantly copied and circulated. From that time I was a good deal abroad, though I visited Plymouth. I saw clericalism creeping in, but at first thought it was merely from circumstances. The deaf people were placed round the table, and consequently the speakers were to stand at it. This soon evidently defined them. I saw the tendency, and sat in the body of the congregation, and spoke thence when I spoke. I was remonstrated with, but retained my position. On the last visit before the present one, finding the teachers always breaking bread [*i.e.*, always officiating at the communion table], I urged some other doing it, or this union of the two things would soon be a regular clergy. Mr. H[arris]<sup>2</sup> to whom I spoke (but as to all), made no difficulty, and something was done."

<sup>1</sup> I cannot guarantee the accuracy of this account. The circumstances in question, and many that follow, are stated on the authority of Darby's *Narrative of Facts Connected with the Separation of the Writer from the Congregation Meeting in Ebrington Street*. It is right to say that some people whose judgment is entitled to respect have considered that this tract is anything but a narrative of facts. I am not prepared to speak positively. The tone of the tract inspires no confidence. On the face of it, it is the work of a passionate partisan; and even if the writer had the fullest intention to speak the truth, it is very doubtful that he was in a state of mind to know what the truth was. Any reader of the tract can see for himself that Darby never fails to throw the benefit of the doubt into the scale against his rival; that he attempts to discredit him by dwelling on acts of his supporters with which he may well have nothing to do; that no tittle-tattle is too paltry to be pressed into the service against him. It must therefore be treated as a party-pamphlet, of a more than usually unreliable order; but I am not certain that we have to go further. Even if the tract be positively untruthful, it would not affect my narrative; for I have only followed it where the writer could have no interest in making an erroneous statement; except in a few instances (such as the above), in which I give distinct warning that I am only repeating Darby's statements.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 53.

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take the oversight of ministry, and that he would hinder that which was manifestly unprofitable and unedifying"; that Darby also, writing from Dublin, addressed a letter to "B. Newton, Esq., Elder of the Saints meeting in Raleigh Street, Plymouth";<sup>1</sup> and that "on one occasion Mr. Newton had in the assembly to stop ministry which was manifestly improper, with Mr. J. N. Darby and Mr. G. V. Wigram's presence and *full concurrence*". Speaking from memory, I believe Darby recognised Wigram as occupying a similar position in his London meeting. Evidently then, if Newton prevented ministry much at his own discretion, he did not in that particular depart from general early practice. That Newton exercised his right tyrannically is perfectly possible, and would not surprise me, though I do not think that any proof that it was so is now available.<sup>2</sup>

But by far the bitterest of Darby's complaints related to Newton's alleged systematic effort to band together all the Brethren everywhere, so far as his influence could reach them, in resolute opposition to the school of doctrine of which Darby was the head. That such an effort was actually being made, and made strenuously, there is no doubt whatever. Newton was measuring

<sup>1</sup>This was the meeting-place till 1840, when the church removed to Ebrington Street, retaining the old room for mission work, prayer meetings, etc.

<sup>2</sup>Dr. Tregelles gives the following extract from a tract written by G. V. Wigram in (as he believes) 1844.

"E. Do you admit 'a regular ministry'?"

"W. If by a regular ministry you mean a *stated* ministry (that is, that in every assembly those who are gifted of God to speak to edification will be both limited in number and known to the rest), I do admit it; but if by a regular ministry you mean an *exclusive* ministry, I dissent. By an *exclusive* ministry I mean the recognising certain persons as so *exclusively* holding the place of teachers, as that the use of a real gift by any one else would be irregular."

see also  
407  
2105

questing an explanation, before publicly assailing the acknowledged leader of a very large Christian community—not to say a personal friend of fourteen or fifteen years' standing—with accusations of a grave moral character, the like of which had never been imputed to him before, by friend or by foe.

These startling events being noised abroad, leading members of the community of the Brethren flocked to Plymouth from all parts in order to investigate the circumstances. The investigation actually began on Friday, December 5, ten Brethren (not counting Darby or Newton) being present. Of this number three were believed to have been invited by Newton; two (Sir Alexander Campbell and Mr. Potter) were invited by Darby; two (Code and Rhind) by Soltau, Newton's principal lieutenant in the trouble that followed, but one who through the preceding quarrel had sympathised in some particulars with Darby; <sup>1</sup> two (Wigram and Naylor) were uninvited; and one (Parnell, who had by this time succeeded to the peerage as Lord Congleton) was invited both by Darby and Newton. It is a striking tribute to the love of truth and fair play with which Congleton is, I believe, usually credited, that two rivals so bitterly at strife should have concurred in soliciting his presence. He had returned from India with Cronin in 1837, feeling that there was not such prospect of success in the mission as to justify him in remaining.

Of the uninvited men Wigram was, by Darby's own account, "considered an adversary to Mr. Newton," and Naylor was apparently regarded in that light by Newton himself. Sir A. Campbell had formerly belonged to the

<sup>1</sup>I follow the *Narrative of Facts*, deeming it on this point sufficiently trustworthy to warrant the statement in the text.

1 Sir Alexander  
Campbell.  
2 Potter.  
3 Code.  
4 Rhind.  
5 Wigram.  
6 Naylor.  
7 Lord Congleton.  
In addition  
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been three of  
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note 112 (vii)

Of those of this line  
who were not of  
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views (at least  
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(There were heavy  
later excommunications  
for views on non-attendance  
of punishment - see Darby's  
letter of heavy 1845 -  
Vol II pp 245 +)

church at Ebrington Street, but had removed to Exeter. He disapproved of Newton's line of things. Of the other men, Code, long well known amongst the Brethren as "Code of Bath," was the most interesting. As a curate of the Church of Ireland he enjoyed the very high esteem of his diocesan, good Archbishop Trench of Tuam; but in the beginning of 1836, under the influence of Darby and Hargrove,<sup>1</sup> he resigned his curacy. He was not, however, a pronounced partisan of Darby's, and exerted himself at Plymouth in the interests of peace.

The investigation was a most curious proceeding, and barren of everything but fresh occasions of strife. The functions of the board of investigation were left totally indefinite, and no less so its scope of enquiry. It had certainly no judicial authority, and its almost haphazard constitution should have precluded the idea that it was a board of arbitration. Indeed, before it assembled, Darby's action had ensured its futility. Lord Congleton had arrived in Plymouth some little time before, and on the 26th of November he and three others, at Newton's request, addressed a letter to Darby, suggesting that Darby should choose four brethren to meet an equal number nominated by Newton, "to enquire into and report on the charges said to have been made . . . on Monday the 17th, etc." Darby refused. "I thought it," he says, "a worldly way of settling it. Nor can I yet see that, when a person is charged with sin in the church, it is a scriptural way that he should name four persons to investigate it, and the one who has charged him four more. Indeed I was justified in this by every spiritual

<sup>1</sup>Hargrove had himself been a most successful minister of the Irish Church. He joined the Brethren in 1835, and died in fellowship with the "open" party in 1869, at the age of 76. He was an advocate of some restriction on open ministry, and was severely animadverted upon by Darby in consequence.

but see preface, p. vii.



rights, I do not say of a Christian brother, but of a fellow-creature.

Newton, before making any reply to Harris's tract, issued an authoritative account of his own views, under the title of *Remarks on the Sufferings of the Lord Jesus*. Darby immediately struck in with *Observations on a Tract*, etc. The tone is rude and unfeeling. He endeavours to fasten on Newton the full responsibility for the notes—a responsibility that Newton afterwards disowned. "The person from whom it came, residing in the house with him . . . stated that it was the substance of Mr. N.'s lecture correctly given. One can understand that he could not disown, and that he dared not own it." Harris's action is justified in the following remarkable passage:—

"A man manufactures poison and distributes it without avowing his name, and disseminates it assiduously in secret to destroy and ruin. . . . Is it not to be labelled, because the poisoner, in order to facilitate his mischief, will not do it? . . . Because he acts secretly and subtilly, am I to keep his secret, if, without any art or even seeking it, I have discovered it by the providence of God? No; I must publish plainly what it is, and who it is."

The imputation was made in ignorance, for Newton had not yet disclaimed all knowledge of the manuscript, but the passage is a good example of the settled principle of its author,—to condemn Newton unheard on every possible count. After this, we do not expect Newton to receive any quarter in respect of his character as a Christian.

"The ignorance of some things proves there is no knowledge of God. . . . The first tract shews this in the things of God. The second still more (in the effort to save the writer's credit)—entire indifference to the truth and glory of Christ. He declares his value for things, which not to value would discredit him; but fatal error is slurred and glossed over without a regard for the Christ it

pp 44-45  
of Vol 11  
of Henry  
Hall's  
of  
"collected  
activity"

in others. . . . Sir A. Campbell gave his judgment in a few grave and weighty words, quoting as his verdict, 'Dead flies make the ointment of the apothecary to stink; so doth a little folly one who is in high reputation for wisdom and honour'. During an interval between the meetings he remained in the room, with his legs resting on one of the benches, looking desolate and dejected."

This account of the conference seriously qualifies the version that has long been current among the Darbyites. William Trotter of York, an ex-Methodist minister, is more highly spoken of by every one that knew him than almost any other Plymouth Brother; and his untimely death, while he was yet under fifty, was felt to be a heavy loss of the kind that Christians can least afford. Such a man is entitled to a charitable judgment if, under the impression that the ark of God was imperilled, he was betrayed into an unworthy action in its defence. His *Whole Case of Plymouth and Bethesda* vies with the *Narrative of Facts* itself in advertising its own untrustworthiness. With regard to the Bath meeting, Trotter states that "the brethren who had been rescued from the doctrinal errors of Mr. N. . . . made further confession, full and ample, as to their implication in the charges made against the untruthful, immoral system of Ebrington Street. *They acknowledged that these charges were just.* One, at least, of those who signed their names to 'the Plymouth Documents' . . . confessed that these documents were justly chargeable with trickery and falsehood." Trotter, who was not present, claims Robert Howard of Tottenham as his informant. He may have misunderstood Howard, but in any case his statement is self-stultifying, and no authentication can help it greatly. He speaks of "further" confession, but I can find no trace of any made previously; and in

neatly misreads Trotter here. The words which he has omitted in the extract from Trotter's tract just quoted are "and whose confessions have been noticed." Trotter is clearly referring to the confessions of doctrinal error at Plymouth (see pp 134-140) which he has just related in his pamphlet, or is saying that now they made additional confession of error. Trotter had no part in Trotter's judgment of his tract as that Trotter had no part in

saying "one at least," what did he intend his readers to infer as to the others?

It is not wonderful that the adherents of Darby should have caught at any chance of accrediting his extraordinary *Narrative*. Trotter makes another effort. Not only Howard, but also Andrew Jukes (at that time associated with the Brethren), assured him that "every endeavour to shake" the testimony of Darby's pamphlets recoiled "on the heads of those who made them"—to wit, of such men as Lord Congleton, and the late Robert Nelson, then of Edinburgh.

I have not assumed that the pamphlets in question are deliberately untruthful; but as for their reliability, let any one read them<sup>1</sup> and judge for himself. With regard to the effect said to have been produced at the Bath meeting on the minds of Howard and Jukes, it is impossible to attach any weight to it. To pit Lord Congleton against Mr. Darby in a public discussion, without a very strong chairman, was no more likely a way to elicit the truth than any other form of the time-honoured method of single combat.

From this time Newton ceased to take any active part in the history of the Brethren. He survived his separation from them by more than fifty years, standing, until his recent death, at the head of a very small but very devoted band of disciples. His doctrinal errors in the period preceding the separation are not to be denied; but certain circumstances must be mentioned that more or less extenuate his responsibility, and that also shed light on the early doctrinal conceptions of the Brethren in general.

In the first place, Newton's greatest error, of which he made such ample confession, had been taught by him

<sup>1</sup> *Collected Writings, Eccl.*, vol. iv.

Remember that Congleton had been formally involved in the Plymouth debate, and the remaining correspondence shows that Darby had been guilty of considerable provocation in conversation with him. Congleton had every reason to suspect the truth of Darby's pamphlet—and if he was not able to "shake" them in debate it shows no more (as heathen rightly implies) than that Darby was the better debater!

Knowledge & wrote entirely from hearing. Hegels & Congleton took a formal part in the Plymouth proceedings.