

THE EVIL AND THE REMEDY
OF
PLYMOUTH BRETHRENISM,

(SO-CALLED);

A LETTER TO THE READERS OF THE TRACT

ENTITLED

“ BRETHRENISM ;

Its Attractions, its Evil, and its Remedy.”

Swindon :

ALFRED BULL, PRINTER, VICTORIA STREET.

1866.

ONE PENNY.

STILL ON SALE

PRICE 2d., BY POST 3d.

“Brethrenism; its Attractions, its Evil,
and its Remedy.”

In quantities of 25 and more, at half-price.

THE EVIL AND THE REMEDY

OF

Plymouth Brethrenism (So-called.)

A LETTER TO THE READERS OF THE TRACT ENTITLED

‘ BRETHRENISM ;

ITS ATTRACTIONS, ITS EVIL, AND ITS REMEDY.’



DEAR READERS,

Finding some of you have felt a little troubled at the *apparent* deception of my tract above named, I feel it may not be out of place to say a few words by way of explanation. It cannot but be allowed that there is on the *surface* some reason for some of the remarks which it has called forth, but as a matter of *simple fact* this is not the case. There is not in *reality* the *least deception or untruthfulness*, but, on the contrary, I maintain that the evil and the remedy of what some unjustly call Brethrenism, as stated in the said tract, are *strictly and positively true*.

Every one who knows aught about the matter knows very well that it is the common complaint of the humanly ordained ministers, that Brethren do disturb the minds of the godly in their flock, by getting them to think as to whether their ecclesiastical position is according to the mind and will of God as declared in His Word. It is well known too, that it is considered a shameful thing thus to awaken such a spirit of enquiry. I well remember in my own case, when my mind was exercised as to my place in the Establishment, that the clergyman told me that the Brethren always

endeavoured to raise the question in the minds of the godly as to whether their church position was a right one; and I remember agreeing with him that it was a great shame to disturb our peace and quiet. Yet, surely when one reflects for a moment, is it not really a great kindness to bring such matters before us? for we ought to be able to give a very decided and scripturally clear reason for what we are doing, and where we are as to the things of God. It shows a very bad state of soul for one to go on (and to desire to do so) in blissful ignorance as to matters of eternal interest, and which affect the honour and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the things of time and the world, we are careful and particular enough not to engage in what we have not well considered. If we have to enter into an agreement about anything, if it be the settlement of property, or anything else, we are cautious enough, and lest we should err we call to our assistance those who are well-skilled in such things. Should we be less careful about divine things? Should we be less interested as to our heavenly walk? Should we be indifferent as to whether we are obeying the commandments of the Lord or not? (See 1 Cor. xiv. 37.) The Lord give us true exercise of soul to answer these questions in His presence. I know very well when the Word of God was brought to bear on my mind and heart,—seeing how impossible it was to justify anything in the system in which I was—seeing it was from its very basis to its topmost stone altogether contrary to the Word, that there was in the Word nothing at all like it, and seeing that I must eventually find myself out-side of it, I began to abuse those who had brought me into the light. I did not wish to leave it. I was very comfortable and at ease in it. I was somebody, and having some little place of prominence, and some measure of influence, I began to complain, and thought it.

a great shame that my peace and quiet should be so disturbed. Thus I can quite understand from my own personal experience the feelings of those who do complain, and speak of it as an evil, that Brethren seek to exercise the consciences of the godly ones in the denominations, as to whether their position there is according to the mind of God.

But do these who thus complain go after the wanderers, and seek their restoration, pointing out to them their errors? Do these backsliding children get any response to their earnest and affectionate appeals for those who condemn them to come and instruct them? I have appealed and appealed again and again to those who condemn me, but as for any response, I get none. The door of one of my nearest relatives is shut against me for the truth's sake, but he refuses to instruct me, though the strongest of appeals has been pressed on him. Is this like the good Shepherd? Surely not. Are these so called ordained ministers worthy of the title they claim of pastor or shepherd? They are not worthy. It just occurs to me that I have heard of more than one case where the clergyman sent and sought the reclamation of such wanderers. The messenger returned, not however, with the sheep that had strayed, but confessing that the teacher had been taught, and that the wanderers had the truth on their side, and therefore they (the messengers) must leave the establishment too, and go along with the wanderer outside the camp to a rejected Christ, bearing His reproach. (Heb. xiii.) This may account for the manifest cautiousness on the part of the so-called shepherds. "The cause" is sure to be weakened by the godly ones coming face to face with the Word of God. It has been my experience too, in many places where I have been preaching the Word, to have heard of the ministers of the various denominations complaining from the pulpit of this

evil, that Brethren do exercise and disturb the minds of the *godly* in their various flocks. *Their* flocks indeed! They are *made to think*, and like the Bereans to test all by the Word of God. See again the testimony of the *Record*. "That Paper stated that they have weakened most of the existing Churches, by enticing away MANY of the BEST members."

We have too the important testimony of Mr. Spurgeon who has said that Brethren are not only sheep stealers, but they steal the fattest of the flock. Many private letters from the clergy and dissenting ministers I have seen to the same effect, all complaining that the minds of their best members are made to question whether they are really walking according to the mind of God.

Then how is this remarkable thing to be accounted for? that the best and the fattest are the first to be affected. The answer must be that there is better pasture. If these "best members,"— these "fattest of the flock," find that the shepherds no longer feed them, and that they see better pasture elsewhere why, of course they will, being godly, be sure to wander to it and follow that which is according to God. That this is the case I can myself testify as thousands beside can. How often have we met with those who on hearing one of these so-called Plymouth Brethren for the first time have exclaimed, Oh! this is the very teaching I have been longing for. Many such cases I have myself found. These sheep find too, now that they have given up a *one man*, stated and humanly ordained minister, that they are brought into association with the good, the great, the chief Shepherd HIMSELF, Jesus the Christ, our Lord, who never lets them hunger or thirst, but who always fills to the full according to their measure whether it be large or small. Once they were dependent upon what a fellow creature could make up in his

study, and as I can well remember, the great aim seemed to be to take as small a portion of God's word and bring in as much of man's as possible. But now no more of this sort of thing. The time past has very well sufficed for such food. No more of this for those who have learnt what it is to have practical communion with the true and personal Shepherd as seated on the Father's throne. In HIM dwelleth *all the fulness* of the Godhead bodily. He is all in all. Oh what sweet, what solid, what blessed pasture is this! Christ Jesus is the true and the living bread from heaven. He is the smitten Rock, from whence has flowed living waters—rivers of which are to flow out of him who believeth in Jesus. This blessed Lord Jesus manifests HIMSELF to his own, and it is upon him they feed, and as they feed they are changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of God. Is this the Christ we used to have presented to our souls by these humanly selected Shepherds?

For my own part I must say it was not, why for 18 years, I was kept in horrid bondage, crying out, oh wretched man that I am, God have mercy on us miserable sinners, grant us thy peace, spare us good Lord, and so on; but when a full Christ was presented to me, by these despised ones, I found peace and joy, liberty and hope, and every spiritual blessing. It is a very different sort of Christ I know now to what I did in the establishment.

See the Christ of Mr. Spurgeon in his own language. The following is an extract from a Sermon, delivered on Sunday morning, May 6th, 1866, by C. H. Spurgeon, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

The subject of the sermon was the temptation of Christ on the pinnacle, and Mr. Spurgeon asks:—

“What think you, brethren, were the Temptations

which came upon the Saviour on account of his position on the high and holy place? We frequently forget when we are speaking of the Saviour that he was truly man. He was divine, without mitigation of the royalty and splendour of Deity; but he was man, altogether such as we are, so that he felt as you and I would have felt in a similar condition. How then did he feel? *Did he not tremble with fear of falling?* Standing there and looking down, I believe *the natural fear came over him that he must fall, and that falling, he would stain the battlements of the consecrated place, and defile the house of God with his own blood.* You will think me singular in imagining that the Saviour could be the subject of such feelings, *but was not he a man, and what man would feel otherwise? It is natural that a shivering emotion of dread should creep over any one standing in so lofty and unprotected a position.* Now this is a temptation—a temptation to which God's servants who are put upon the pinnacle of the temple will find themselves frequently subject."

"There is something sweeter yet,—Jesus was tempted, but Jesus never sinned. *Then, my soul, it is not needful for thee to sin, for Jesus was a man, and if one man endured these temptations and sinned not, then by the same grace another may do so.*"

These horrid statements about Christ need no comment. They are so plain that they speak for themselves. Just think for a moment of one saying of the Son of God—"God manifest in the flesh"—that he had the fear of falling, and that it was possible for Him, the Holy One, to *stain and defile* anything with His blood. He himself said "I lay down my life that I might take it again, no man taketh it from me. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again." *John x. 18.*

Again, can anything be more wicked and blasphemous

than to reduce the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, "that holy thing," (*Luke* i. 35). to the level of that which is unholy, born dead in trespasses and sin, and to say that he was preserved from sin by the grace of God. Is this Mr. Spurgeon's Saviour? Well, he is no Saviour for me. Mr. Spurgeon himself would be every whit as good a one. No one who is capable of falling into sin is a Saviour for sinners.

Be it remembered that Mr. Spurgeon has thought over this subject. He has preached it and he has revised and corrected it for the press, so that these are well considered and no hasty expressions.

Is this the mortar—the untempered mortar, with which the Editor of the *Sword and Trowel* is building up the Church of God? It is time—high time he took a somewhat lower place than the rectifier of everybody.

It is the Scriptures of God which present the true and full Christ, not such as Mr. Spurgeon presents.

It is in the Word of God, read as it is written in all its simplicity, that these fat sheep these best members discover the full Christ, that their souls can feed on. They find that these so-called ministers present a very different sort of Christ than that which the Word declares. Here they find the best food and so having really tasted this better, it is no matter of surprise that they turn away from the worse.

Well, if this be so, and it is, the remedy for Brethrenism, so-called, must be a closed bible. For if it is an open bible that shows the evils of the systems of men, the true Shepherd of souls and the best of pasture, then a closed one must be the cure, and I challenge all to say whether Brethren ever bring other books or authorities to bear upon the consciences of their fellow christians than the one book—the word of the living God. I ask too, whether Brethren

ever seek to draw believers to any other person than that of the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven—with whom they desire to leave all in close and abiding communion. No standard—no authority but the Word of God for these Brethren, and I challenge all to show that they have any other, or that they own any other centre of gathering than Jesus the Christ, our Lord; and what is more, I challenge all the denominations to show that they have this as their one and only standard; for I do say boldly, decidedly, and definitely, let a soul *honestly* come to the word of God, as a babe sincerely desiring to be taught of the Holy Ghost, the result must to a certainty be that that soul will see the monstrous evils and the awful wickedness of the religious systems of the day as established by man. It would be impossible for such a soul to fail seeing the terrible way in which they dishonour God and Christ, the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Therefore I repeat that the certain remedy (that is to say, that which will keep a soul from the position Brethren have taken) of so-called Brethrenism is a closed Bible. Only let a soul get divinely exercised through the Word, and I say, alas! for “the cause;” so that I do say and maintain, the best thing for the ministers of these “causes” is to keep the godly members in the dark, and dole out such things as will please them, and there will be no danger. But let them once get their minds and hearts honestly in exercise in the face of an open Bible—alas! for “the cause,” alas! for the salary, &c., &c., &c. It will, I doubt not, be said, oh, but the denominations own the Word of God as the only standard of truth. Of course I grant that they have the word, but that they use it as the only standard most emphatically do I deny. If they say they do, let them give me the Scripture.

1st.—For the Church of God (which Christ says is not

of the world) to be a "*creature of the state*," as it was said to be by the highest authority in the land, and supported by the world which is at enmity against God.

2nd.—I ask for Scripture to justify the doctrine of baptismal regeneration as taught in the Establishment, also that by that sacrament an infant is made a child of God.

3rd.—I ask for Scripture authority for the one man ministry—its payment *as it is* in the various established systems of religion. It may be thought that I ignore all Ministry save that of the Lord Jesus Himself. This is not so, I do own and bless God for the Ministry of His servants who have been, apart from Man and Human arrangements, called by God into the Ministry. But the Ministry *as it is* in the various denominations, I hate as that which is contrary to the Word of God, dishonouring to Christ and most injurious to souls. I say injurious to souls, because the one man stated ministry hinders the Holy Ghost from using whom He will to the edification of the Church of God. The one man Ministry quenches the Spirit and subjects to human arrangement many of His gifts, the exercise of which are thus prevented.

4th.—Again, where does the Word of God say that they, the quenchers of God's Spirit in others, are to wear a distinctive and peculiar garb, and where do they find that one or more men appointed are to do the whole of the service. Do not the Scriptures rather instruct us that *all* may prophecy, that is, to speak to edification, to comfort, or exhortation. (1 Cor. xiv, 3 and 31.)

5th.—Are not *all* believers priests according to 1 Peter 2. Where then is there Scripture authority for setting apart certain persons as priests—being so set apart by human agents?

We might thus go on and ask question after question of this kind, but to make the matter short I ask where is there Scripture authority for anything as carried on by the religious systems, for I must honestly confess I do not know of scarcely anything in Scripture at all like what I find in these places. Oh no, there is no word of God to justify their proceedings. It is all established on human authority. It is mere ecclesiastical assumption. It is the witty invention of natural man. And yet again, I would ask another question, where is there Scripture to warrant the re-establishment of Moses to the setting aside of Christ? Both we cannot follow. (John i. 17, Gal. iii. 23, 24, 25). Where does the Word of God teach us to set up the law in place of grace, for both we cannot have; (Rom. xi. 6.) or law instead of faith, (Gal. iii. 12.) or law instead of the Holy Ghost? (Gal. v. 18.)

Oh dear reader, depend upon it, the religious systems are fearful evils—most dishonouring to God and his Christ—the Holy Ghost, and his Word, and most damaging to souls. May the Lord open the eyes of many in these last and perilous times to see the terrible evils of these so-called churches of men, and seek grace to cease to do evil, learn to do well, and to wait for God's Son from heaven. While I thus write so plainly and faithfully, I do so in truest love for your souls, feeling in my own soul the increasing evil of the day, the speedy coming of the Lord, and daily more thankful that the God of all grace has delivered me from systems so dreadfully dishonouring to Him. The Lord guide you and

Believe me,

Yours faithfully,

The writer of the tract.

“BRETHRENISM; ITS ATTRACTIONS, ITS EVIL AND ITS REMEDY.”