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Some Remarks

on

Mr. Holborow's Doctrine.



“For every high priest, *taken from among men*, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins :

Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way : for that he himself also *is compassed with infirmity*. Heb. v. 1, 2.

For such an high priest became us, who is *holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners*, and made higher than the heavens ;

Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s : for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

For the law maketh men high priests which *have infirmity* ; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, *maketh the Son*, who is consecrated for evermore. Heb. vii, 26—28.

Some Remarks on Mr. Holborow's doctrine.

IT is a little strange that a pamphlet sent out to prove the justice of Bethesda's cause should need, in the very part which refers to doctrine, to be patched with the pen so extensively, after being printed. I refer, of course, to one entitled "Correspondence about Bethesda in 1892," and being circulated in the hope of justifying the position taken by O. B.

To one or two points in it I desire to call attention, and to the sad fact that Mr. Holborow's statements are extremely bad, and defective, to use the mildest term possible, where they ought to enunciate the truth emphatically. I fancy that many of the Lord's dear people who are in fellowship with Bethesda, will hardly feel very comfortable, as they read what Mr. H. says in defense of his party. The accusation brought by Mr. Rickard reads thus:—

"But what do we find was taught by the man whose name appears first to the "Letter of the Ten," Mr. H. Craik? "If the Lord Jesus had taken poison, would He not have died?" Another says of him, "We have heard, and we do believe, a shameful, irreverential, and vile expression attributed to Mr. Craik." Mr. Trotter says of him, "What he says there of the Lord's humanity, leaves no room for doubt that he does, to a great extent, sympathise with Mr. N's unsound views." Mr. Wigram, in an Appeal, page 8, thus writes:—"He (Mr. Craik) said with great warmth the other day, that J. N. D. and his followers made too much of the humanity of the Lord Jesus, and that he believed if the Lord had not been crucified, He would have lived to be a shrivelled old man, and have died a *natural death*." And more to a similar effect."

On p. 10, and paragraph 35; Mr. Holborow says, after some words of extenuation, speaking of Mr. Craik: "He never admitted that he had been correctly reported, but explained *he uttered the phrases in question* in opposition to assertions which appeared to him to involve a denial that Jesus Christ came in flesh, and was perfectly human as well as Son of God." The italics are mine, and making all due allowance for what is said in the first part of the sentence, the words italicised involve an acknowledgement that in substance he said what was imputed to him.

In paragraph 36 Mr. H. begins his defence of the statements, and I would call attention to the Scriptures he refers to: first as to Heb. ii: 17. evidently the Spirit of God would teach by these words "being made like unto his brethren" that in His life of suffering, and on the cross, He who by title was exempt from it all, underwent what gave Him his acquired perfectness, or fitness for the place which He fills for us with God. Always perfect, He yet had to be perfected, and the latter through suffering; yet nothing of this involves the idea of what Mr. H. asserts of the Lord's humanity being "identical with ours." These last are Mr. H.'s word's, but the need of some correction has been felt, and with a pen is added "as God made ours." He is not satisfied with "veritable flesh and blood," [page 18] which Mr. R. uses to state his view of the Lord's person; but insists it was "veritably identical with ours," the danger of which statement was felt evidently when with the pen some corrector has added, "as God made ours."

With Mr. Holborow, "*being made like* unto His brethren" is taken for identity in nature, whilst it evidently refers to something entirely different. The 'brethren' are fallen, sinful men, and to be made like them in the sense in which he would have the passage taken, would *involve* what no one who loves the Lord Jesus truly could accept. I do not say Mr. H. would allow such a thing or tolerate the thought, but his view of the passage is dangerous in the extreme, and involves it.

A lot of unhappy reasoning follows [page 18] as to what *could have happened*, but unfortunately all these things only help to hinder clear seeing for simple souls, and

have one fatal defect in that they leave out and ignore the character and ways of God. It is *not true* that God *could* have sent these marks of age and infirmity upon the Lord Jesus, nor the things of which Mr. Craik spoke, and one has to ask what makes these Brethren write so, as to the Holy One of God, if there is not something radically unsound in their views? Why speak of things as possible to Him, which were only possible to a sinner? The Scripture pictures the Lord Jesus growing up from infancy to perfect maturity, manifesting at each step and in every circumstance, His own inherent perfection, and there it stops, and to say that anything else could have happened is to involve the Lord in the consequences of the fall, and one wonders how one who owes his salvation to the humiliation of the Son of God, can do other than reject with indignation such unholy trifling. Referring to the Lord's body after death Mr. H. asks: "why does Scripture say, 'Neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption,' concerning the Lord's body, if 'before there could have been natural decay its very nature must be changed'? Is not the interposition of God here clearly indicated?" he adds. The answer is simple and evident, that is, that the Lord had given Himself up to the judgment of sin as the substitute for others and had been brought by the holy hand of God down to the dust of death, the consequence and penalty of sin. When all had been done that was needed to satisfy the claims of Divine righteousness and glory, the answer came in the power of God raising Him from the dead. Thus was fulfilled the Scripture, and thus was secured God's glory, and no indignity was permitted, nor could be, that was not absolutely necessary for the work accomplished, to this the character of God was pledged, even to the providing the new tomb of the rich man wherein never man had been laid; according to Isaiah liii, 9. and to use the words of the Holy Spirit as to the dead body of Christ, 'Thou wilt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption,' to justify Mr Craik's assertions, is a sad proof of what has to be defended.

Does Mr. H. not know that the things named as possible to the Lord, could not even have happened to an

obedient Israelite, if such could have been found. Decay is the way to death and dissolution, and can only be the consequence of sin. Yet Mr. H. says: [page 18] "Mr. Craik's statements involve no imputation of sin to Christ, nothing impossible to the humanity of our Lord: [!!] but he was wrong in predicting such things *would* without His authority." Then Mr. Craik did predict they would happen, and Mr. Holborow undertakes to defend and extenuate such expressions! Is there no leaven at work in Bethesda? Saying such things *would* come on the Holy One of God then is no serious outrage upon the person of the Lord for, "He [Mr. R.] has to prove Mr. C. a heretic before he can talk about 'Craik's heresies.' [page 18]. But if this is not counted heresy by Mr. H. he asserts at the end of the same paragraph that those who hold the doctrine maintained by Mr. R. as to the Lord's person would not be suffered in fellowship at Bethesda!! A reference to page 17 will show what it is Mr. H. thus stigmatizes as Gnosticism and which would therefore be refused.*

But I turn back to consider a moment the second of Mr. H.'s quotations from Heb. ii. [page 10 paragraph 36] "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same &c." To this Mr. H. adds "and you cannot deny that the statements Mr. Craik made are true of His brethren, it is just as wrong to deny them as to assert them, "for with God all things are possible," is added here in ink in the copy I have before me. What does this mean? These things are true of His brethren, and the passage is quoted from Heb. to preface the sentence, and it is "as wrong to deny them as to assert them". Then it is *wrong to deny* the assertions attributed to Mr. Craik; and Mr. C. was just as wrong in asserting them. I am perplexed to know what to understand here, but I leave it with the reader to unravel the knot, and content my-

*Mr. Rickard says: "That Holy Thing which was born of Mary was essentially free from every element of decay. . . before there could have been natural decay its very nature must be changed." . . . "It was real humanity, but it was *His*, in our human circumstances never subject to decay or dissolution." This is branded by Mr. Holborow, as "a most dangerous error, and it must be exposed at once."

self with the thought that if it was true it would not be wrong to assert it; nor if false to deny it, and it is either true or a *very grave* departure from the truth.

It is unhappy for Mr. H.'s doctrine, but an unspeakable comfort for those who do not tolerate what, if followed to its legitimate results would put a blemish on the Holy One of God, that neither of the passages he relies on afford the least foundation for what they are cited in support of, but the opposite. If the reader will turn to Heb. ii, 14 and look it up in the Greek Testament, there will be seen something of the care of the Spirit of God in guarding against such irreverent notions. The children were *partakers* of flesh and blood "and He also Himself *took part* of the same." Now two different words are used in this passage. The children are *partakers* of flesh and blood the word used is *koinoneo*, or a sharing in common, connected with the word communion. Had this word been used as to the Lord's participation in humanity there might have been some ground for Mr. H.'s views, but the word *took part* is *meteko*, and by referring to Luke v. the difference is clearly seen. There are two words translated "partners" in verses 7 and 10. In ver. 7, "they beckoned to their *partners* which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them." *Partners* here is *metokos*, and might better be translated *fellows*; that is, they were fishermen also, but did not share equally in the proceeds of the fishing. It is the verb of this noun that is used of the Lord in Heb. ii. *took part* of the same, and the same word in Heb. i, 9. "above thy *fellows*." In verse 10, of Luke v. we have "which were *partners* with Simon. These were truly sharers in the full sense with Simon, and the same word is used as in Heb. 2, "The children were *partakers* of flesh and blood," they shared it in common, were alike identically. This has been often noticed, and it is a wonder Mr. H. could have overlooked the importance of it. (See a note on Heb. ii, 14 in the new translation by J. N. D.)

Let me add in conclusion that in writing what I have it is as deeply deploring the controversy, and the need of it; but the attack has come from themselves, and from the persistent effort to force upon us an unrestricted fel-

lowship, whether we wish it or not. A forced fellowship would be a poor substitute for that which the Spirit of God produces. I know no way amidst the sad discord and humbling divisions of today, but to cultivate, as far as can be, within the prescribed limits of the word of truth, brotherly love towards those manifestly the children of God according to Eph. iv, and no fleshly zeal can accomplish this.

I would also say, that as it is often stated that the charges sustained against Bethesda and her principles are unjust, that if those who think she is falsely accused will look at some of the tracts put forth from Welbeck St. some years ago, they will find more than enough to justify the charges. I add a brief quotation from the Introduction to the Biography of A. N. Groves which bears the imprint of the Bristol Bible and Tract Warehouse.

From the Memoir of the late A. N. Groves, Bristol Bible and Tract Warehouse.

Page 523. On the principles of union and communion in the Church of Christ.

“Should we be asked: What are to be done with errors? Are they not a bar to communion? No; unless they bar Christ from the temple of the erring brother’s heart. While we hope Christ lingers let us linger, and rather be behind than before to quit, in pitiful remembrance of our own iniquities and unnumbered errors. So long as we judge Christ to be dwelling with a man, that is our warrant for receiving him, and for the charity of that judgment which declares Him not there we are responsible. But when we are fully persuaded Christ is there, we must say with Peter on his visit to Cornelius in the face of the strongest prejudices, “seeing God has given him the like gift He has unto us, who are we that we should withstand God.” But at all events whatever complexity the case may assume; if we are persuaded any one is a brother, and the Lord’s, we must simply resolve in the name of the Lord to love, and to bear with him, because Christ does, be other things as they may. Yet as to our liberty in Christ to wor-

ship with any congregation under heaven where He manifests Himself to bless and to save, can there be in any Christian's mind a doubt? If my Lord should say to me in any congregation of the almost unnumbered sections of the Church; 'What doest thou here?' I would reply, 'Seeing Thou wert here to save and sanctify, I felt it safe to be with Thee,' If He again said, as perhaps He may amongst most of us. 'Did'st thou not see abominations here, an admixture of that which was unscriptural, and the absence of that which was Scriptural, and in some points error, at least in your judgment?' My answer would be: 'Yea, Lord, but I dared not call that place unholy where Thou wert present to bless, nor by refusing communion in worship reject those as unholy whom Thou had'st by thy saving power evidently sanctified, and set apart for Thine own.'

"So long as Christ dwells in an individual, or walks in the midst of a congregation, blessing the ministrations to the conversion and edification of souls, we dare not denounce and formally leave for fear of the awful sin of schism, of sin against Christ and His mystical body."

1857.

Where did these principles come from, if not from Bethesda? Why did not their teachers disclaim them, if not in sympathy with them? Why issue from a tract Depot a book containing such evil principles? Is no one responsible for this? That both the principles and practice were accepted in Open meetings in Canada and the U. S. 25 or 30 years ago, anyone who was in the work of the Lord at that time can testify. That a multitude of souls, and many devoted ones have been brought in among O. B. one gladly owns, and these are ignorant of the former history no doubt, and how far the leaven has spread and affected the work of many dear servants of the Lord, only that day will tell.

However between systems and individuals we may well distinguish, and cherish love to those who are His in a day of strife and failure such as this, whilst maintaining what we believe is due to the Name of the Lord Jesus among His own.

As the preceding paper was about to be printed, I received a copy of another tract, entitled "Retrospection" which calls for a few comments. It is remarkable for its conspicuous lack of the "love that thinks no evil" the necessity for which it so much insists on, and descends to personalities which show how much the gratification of his own resentment against others outweighs with the writer the good of his fellow believers which professedly he desires. It is easy to throw mud, and drag in matters which have no relation to the questions at issue, and to create a bad impression in the minds of his readers as to the servants of the Lord: but it will have little weight with those who remember the saying of the wise man "He that is first in his own cause seemeth to be just; but his neighbour comes and searches him." There are always two sides to a story, and every upright soul will deprecate the way Mr. Buss has made the present controversy an opportunity for gratifying his own personal animosities. To this then I shall pay no more attention, but seek to show from Mr. Buss's own tract a deeper working of evil than his personal accusations, even if found to be true, reveal.

After laying down the law as to how the O. B. should have been dealt with and treated, Mr. B. has much to say which reveals his own unfitness to give a judgment upon the questions at issue. I shall briefly notice some of the things he says; but first to clear the minds of those who read this will state a few points which may help to show what are the real grounds that exist in the way of unrestricted intercommunion with O. B.

I have never heard it hinted that all O. B. are tainted with false doctrine: on the contrary the grace of the Lord so manifest in many of them is thankfully owned, as their faith and labours will surely find their reward in that day.

The difficulty is this, that whilst some of the leaders of O. B. disclaimed all fellowship with loose principles, not only loose principles, but very bad doctrine is being circulated all over the country, in a tract by one whose object is to show that Bethesda is clear from evil, as this is the point in question. It is the active advocates of fellow-

ship with O. B. who are sending out these tracts which were preceded by a number of others, some of which were filled with such intense bitterness that they could have come only from a polluted source. That an opposite effect has been produced by them is not to be wondered at.

I have already pointed out the serious error in Mr. Holborow's teaching, which shows clearly the leaven of Newton's doctrine to be still at work. If O. B. "distinctly disavow all intercommunion with gatherings where fundamental evil is tolerated," let them prove it now in a practical way.

That the doctrine came out in course of a controversy in England, so that Mr. H. cannot be treated as one ignorant of the character of the things he says. Moreover it has been in print two years, and is sent out to prove that Bethesda is clear from unsoundness. In the face of this Mr. B. thinks a reply should be waited for from Mr. H. when he has already spoken plainly enough, and it is a pity Mr. B. cannot discern the evil of his views.

But what are we to think of this? Referring to 1 John iv; 9, Mr. B. states that the doctrine of Christ being the confession that "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh," but adds, "If a brother is in error *as to the nature* of his humanity, he needs instruction, but where is the warrant from Scripture to put such an one away, seeing he *does* confess Jesus Christ come in the flesh?"

If this be so, then there was no ground for putting away Newton himself, for his was an error as to Christ's humanity, and one may teach what involves the Lord in the consequences of man's sin, not as entering into them in grace as one personally outside them, but it is only an error as "*to the nature of his humanity*," and he only needs instruction and not putting away!! It is exactly as to the humanity of Christ that Scripture is everywhere so guarded, because it was the point of contact with us who are sinners, and it is as serious to be unsound as to the humanity of the Lord Jesus, as to deny His deity.

The talk of the love which "thinks no evil," may sound very nice; but if evil doctrine is there it is love to guard

the saints against it, and the Name of the Lord from the dishonoring thoughts of irreverent speculators in divine mysteries.

It is with sorrow I write as to these things; I have sought to keep out of controversy about them, but when attacks upon the Lord's person are extenuated and defended it becomes one to speak out. If we are not united in the desire and purpose to defend the glorious person of the Lord Jesus from defamation; we *may* not be in anything else.

I fancy that many godly souls with O. B. will as little like Mr. B's defense as they will Mr. H's doctrines.

Still later I have seen "How the leaven has wrought," and Mr. Burridge's comments on it, and on "An Allegory."

The gravity of the controversy only increases as one reads what these tracts contain. It is sad to see the attempt on the part of Mr. B. to smooth everything over, at which alas! he is quite an adept. It is an easy way to get along, but dangerous in the extreme, if we would stand for the truth in an evil day. I shall confine myself however, to noticing his comments on the contents of "How the leaven has wrought."

With all the special pleading he indulges in, Mr. B. has not fairly met the charges of that tract, and it matters not whether the writer of it is alone or with many others in his path, let the things stated as facts in it, be fairly met and answered, or consciences will not be at ease, nor should they be. Of course if O. B. have rejected the meeting at R. they are to be commended for faithfulness in this, though Mr. B. is a little vague in what he says as to it, which is, "it has long been avoided by other meetings," as being too careless &c." Still Newton's doctrine seems to have got foothold there by some means from those accredited formerly. But there is still the letter of Mrs. Müller to Mr. Newton: "We have all your books in our lending library, which are extensively read

and greatly appreciated. If you have written anything lately, please tell me what it is, and where I can get it. I always greatly enjoy your writings." Further Mr. Müller is credited with writing under date June 7 : 1893, that "he fully agrees with every doctrine taught in Mr. Newton's books, (recent ones I suppose), and considers them in strict accordance with the Scriptures." It is claimed that Mr. Newton has given up his "fearful errors": but where is the confession of them, which the church of God has a right to look for? What proof is there of the godly sorrow, which works repentance, having been found in him? Quotations from his recent writings are to this effect: "and even as this humanity had all sinless infirmities, so also was it *mortal*," with much else that means that the consequences of sin were inherent in the humanity of our Lord Jesus. Is this "valuable teaching" to be commended to the saints, or filthy dreaming? Scripture says that death came in by sin and disobedience. What then is involved in imputing *mortality* to that blessed One? That the Lord entered in grace into all the consequences of sin, as one personally exempt from all of them, no one who reads the Sacred History can doubt. But man is *mortal* only because he is a sinner, so that under cover the old doctrines of Mr. Newton are reaffirmed and Mr. Müller commends his teaching, and Mr. Holborow evidently is in sympathy with it in part, and any upright soul will esteem it no lack of charity to say so.

Further Mr. N. says "He came not in our nature before the fall, but He came as the Apostle speaks, 'in the likeness of sinful flesh,' that is in flesh that had the marks, and miserable effects, and consequences of sin upon it. Yea, it was attended with a whole troop of human infirmities that sin at first brought into our common nature &c."

Dear reader, what do you think of this? Does Scripture ever apply the word *infirmity* to Christ, save in this

“He was crucified through *weakness* (infirmity)” because He gave Himself up to death to work out atonement; nay, “the law makes men high priests which have *infirmity*, but the word of the oath maketh the Son” (who manifestly had none). Does “the likeness of sinful flesh” refer to the Lord’s nature physically, or to circumstances and suffering and trials, He entered into, as doing all that was essential to restore man to the favor of God? Surely the latter: and this is the foundation of all this system of error, that it applies these passages of the Word to the Lord, as if they referred to the condition of His humanity and not to what He entered into for others. Mr. Burrigge says: “it is unholy, if not positively wicked to subject the person of Christ to the analysis of human intellect,” (page 12). He is filled with indignation against those who would be jealous for the honor of the Lord Jesus, whilst Mr. Holborow’s unsound doctrines are only “simple remarks which after all are only suppositions of what is possible to God, if He so designed it.” The allusion to Mr. Raven’s errors is only an attempt to blind people as to what is in question. “No man knoweth the Son but the Father,” and none can explain and define the mystery of the incarnation. But that does not leave us without responsibility,—without the ardent desire to insist upon what Scripture says about the Holy One of God—that Holy Thing that was begotten of the Holy Spirit, and born of the virgin Mary. These teachers would drag Him down in an insidious way to our level, so that there was inherent in Him our infirmities and even *mortality*, which are the results of sin, and to say “sinless infirmities” is only a blind, for these things *inherent* in humanity are the result of sin, and only found in a fallen creature, as pertaining to his natural condition. So Mr. Holborow can say, besides defending Mr. Craik’s unholy statements, that Christ “never went outside His humanity,” He was “merely a man of faith,” and the just conclusion would be that He laid aside Deity in becom-

ing a man. On page 3 of "Remarks on a Pamphlet" Mr. Holborow says: "Yes, He laid aside His glory, His power, and became a mere believer; humbled—not degraded, and so left us an example that we should follow in His steps." A mere believer then, could make atonement for sin, could lay down his life and take it again, could read and answer the thoughts of men's hearts, could tell a Peter where to cast the net, could send him to catch a fish, with the exact amount of money needed in its mouth, could feed the hungry multitudes with a few loaves and fishes, could say to the winds and waves, "Peace, be still," and a multitude of other things which Jesus did, thus manifesting His glory, that His disciples might believe on Him. Yet all this Mr. H. seems to have been blind to, and one cannot but believe, that it is the deadly poison of B. W. Newton's fatal errors that has thus leavened those who have been under its influence. This is the doctrine that Mr. Müller commends in circulating the writings of B. W. N., and with whom he sympathizes. Pity for "poor Mr. Newton" (as Mr. M. once wrote) instead of hearty judgment of His "fearful errors" has led to guilty acquiescence, and as a result acceptance of what has defiled so many of the the Lord's people and brought reproach upon "that worthy name."

I have passed over the other side of the questions raised in these tracts, though I have never believed Bethesda judged her sin, or adequately confessed it, but I would add that I as little believe God will suffer the re-gathering of the Church either on the lines of Open Brethren, any more than of extreme high church exclusivism. To forget, so largely as is done, the special principles given in the Word for our guidance in the last days is to overlook what alone can guide our feet amidst the ruin that surrounds us everywhere. May the Lord shew mercy to us in this evil day.—ROBERT T. GRANT.