

Anonym

A Retrospect of Events that have taken Place amongst the Brethren

(with Appendix)

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A

RETROSPECT OF EVENTS
THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE AMONGST
THE BRETHREN.

“Hi motus animorum atque hæc certamina tanta
Pulveris exigui jactu compressa quiescunt.”

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RETROSPECT OF EVENTS.

SOME time since, both Churchmen and Dissenters bestirred themselves to oppose “the Plymouth Brethren,” whose invasion they contemplated with alarm, and whose doctrine and practice they perceived had some unaccountable attraction for the most devoted Christians in every religious section. Latterly, however, they have felt less apprehension of this “new way,” because they perceived, that if they did but leave the Brethren alone, and abstain from any external attacks, which might have the effect of consolidating the divided Society, its own internal discords and controversies would effect that, which opposition from without could never have accomplished. Hence they have allowed the Brethren full leisure “to bite and devour one another;” and they calculate with confidence, that ere long they shall not hear much more of “the Brethren.”

Are they who thus calculate likely to be deceived? According to all appearances, the internal strife is producing all the effects that the worst enemies of the Brethren could desire. Time, which cools down most animosities, seems to be of no avail in this case – fresh fuel is always ready to revive the slumbering fire, and the furnace, continually fed by new pamphlets and polemical publications, rages with unabated fury.

In taking a survey of this *immensum odium theologorum*, we are, in the first place, struck with the palpable disagreement between the theory and the practice of the Brethren.

Their cardinal theory is, as is well known, that the Church is in ruins. Upon this theory, if they have based nothing positive for themselves, they have at least made it a foundation for attacking others; for by this their axiom their deduction follows, that it is vain and unwarrantable to attempt to form a Church now-a-days. “The Church is in ruins – it cannot be reconstructed – power there is none now for a Church to act with – the Dissenters, therefore, and all others, are wrong who pretend *to make churches*. Christians can only meet now on faith of the promise given to two or three gathered together in the Lord’s name. To create bishops,* pastors, rulers, or any other church officers, is an arrogant work, on which no blessing can be expected. You cannot have councils of the Church now, and issue decrees, for all is in ruins; we are in the apostacy – we can only meet as witnesses to the apostacy, till the great restitution of all things. How then can you make laws and issue decrees? How can you presume to put forth the energies of ecclesiastical rule, as if the Church were now [4] an integral body? By what authority do you issue rules, and consolidate your power with all the semblance of a well-organized body, when the utmost that you could pretend to was, in faith, and in much trial of faith too, to come together as twos and threes, as grace might lead you, to seek a blessing; but yet with full acknowledgment of the ruined condition of the Church?”

This is very intelligible, and short work it makes of all ecclesiastical devices: it is a besom to sweep down the Protestant not less than the Papal cobwebs, and the many meshes of many forms that have been devised to “catch the winged soul” are thus expedi-

* “The Brethren insisted on a spiritual ministry, and the recurrence to the original principles of ministry was urged; they did not pretend to appoint ministers, nor organize any church or special membership, for they held the unity of all saints.” – *Darby, Narrative of Facts*, p. 11.

tiously destroyed. But then the question naturally arises, how do you, who are now a numerous and extending people, the advocates of such sentiments, bear testimony *amongst yourselves* to your own unsparing propositions? You send forth your doctrines into the religious world, and have produced no small commotion by what you have taught; how then do you yourselves meet the difficulties that cannot be avoided, when Christians, first in small numbers, and then in large congregations, are gathered together, if not as “a Church,” at any rate “to break bread.”

Cases of difficulty must occur, unless immorality is to be left to its own rampant course; and cases of false doctrine may also arise, which it may be expedient to resist. How will you, who are not a Church, but an accidental aggregate of Christians – a “gathering,” as you yourselves term it – be able to grapple with these difficulties? You, who have by your cardinal principle divested yourselves of any claim to exercise authority, either by officers, (whom you do not acknowledge,) or by corporate attributes, when *the body*, the Church, is by you deemed to be no longer in a visible state?

The answer to these important questions is easily obtained from printed documents; for a heresy, real or supposed, has sprung up amongst the Brethren, and we are now able to understand their method of solving ecclesiastical perplexities – it is a method, as we shall presently see, more eccentric than any thing else that has yet appeared amongst them.

The alleged heresy has been detected at Plymouth. The author of it is Mr. Newton, one of the first who, in England at least, began to propound those distinctive views which are known to characterize the Brethren. It would appear, however, that that gentleman had, at an early period, his own particular views of an important point insisted on by “the Brethren” – *liberty of ministry*; he held it indeed, but with modifications and reservations, which, when they were subsequently detected, seemed to his adversaries practically to set aside that which was, elsewhere, something more than a form of words. Matters were, in fact, so arranged at Plymouth, where Mr. Newton’s influence was paramount, that liberty of ministry, as seen in the other gatherings of the Brethren, was not really tolerated. It was a liberty of ministration conceded to those in whom Mr. Newton had confidence, and this confidence was confined within narrow limits. With the outward form of liberty of ministry, and with *appearances* differing not at all from those observable elsewhere, it was well understood at Plymouth, that only a certain few might assume to teach in the meetings there; and the ministrations were consequently sustained by four or five with a regularity that might be reckoned on as pretty nearly certain.

We are not able to state when this important change took place at [5] Plymouth; it was, perhaps, not introduced at first as any distinct plan, but resulted from circumstances, and from Mr. Newton’s dislike of any semblance of insubordination; latterly, however, when a feeling of opposition was excited, Mr. Newton himself was able definitely to explain the sort of system which was in operation under his auspices, and he has done so in the following words, addressed in a letter* to one of his correspondents: – “It must be carefully remembered, that the assertion of the continuance of the gifts of the Spirit does not imply that every one in the congregation may minister. This has been the sad and fatal mistake which has almost ruined our testimony in many places: surely none but teachers may teach, none but evangelists may evangelize, none but prophets prophesy, and all are

* This letter was written, May, 1846. It was handed about in manuscript, as a correct exposition of Mr. Newton’s views on ministry at that time, and thus falling into Mr. Wigram’s hands, was printed by him. “I print it,” says he, “upon my own responsibility, without his leave;” and, indeed, Mr. Newton protested against its publication.

not teachers, nor evangelists, nor prophets. Indeed, the majority of the gifts given to the saints are evidently not intended for the congregation at all, but find the spheres of their exercise out of the congregation, in many an unobtrusive ministration of kindness and love; gifts, too, are abiding – not sudden and impulsive ... A friend, recently writing to me from abroad, and lamenting over the mistaken views that have prevailed amongst many of the Brethren, as to *loose and democratic views of ministry*, says, ‘We must avoid, as to ministry, the thought of unrestrainedness, and a disavowing the responsibility of recognizing as teachers, &c., those whom the Lord has distinctly set as such.’ We are responsible also for checking ministry which is not for edification. E. F. used to say, that the true thought, in connexion with ministry, is ‘stated ministry, but not exclusive.’ I mean by stated ministry, that such and such are the persons who, at such and such a place, are wont to minister, and in fact whose ministry may be expected, whilst at the same time there is no shut door, so far as any whom the Lord may fit for ministry, to be excluded from exercising any gift he may have received. Such are the principles on which we have been acting for more than fourteen years, and we have every reason to be satisfied with it, and to say it is the principle of God.

“Every Lord’s Day morning we meet for communion at the Lord’s table. It is a meeting open to the ministry of any whom God may have gifted for such service: there are generally three or four Brethren present, who are known either to speak or pray to edification in the congregation; and although we do not know beforehand which of them may pray or speak, nor in what order, yet we always expect that some or all of them will take part in the meeting. We believe it to be their duty to stir up the gift that is in them. But whilst we thus expect the regular ministry of some, pauses are allowed to occur, which afford the opportunity for rising gifts, if such there be, to be developed and proved. If any speak, and after the trial their speaking *is not found to edification*, the Brethren who are regarded as addicted to the ministry of the Saints here (of whom there are at present three or four), after consulting others of spiritual weight, wait on the individual and advise him, or, if the case needs, *request him not to minister*. We have not had occasion to act thus more than four or five times during fourteen years; but when we have been obliged to adopt this course, *we have never found it to fail*.”

[6] If Mr. Newton is accurate in his statements, we must date these arrangements as far back as the year 1832, about a twelvemonth after the Brethren first began to meet in Plymouth; and thus, by his own shewing, from the very first, in that locality, where his influence prevailed, there had been a settled plan to counteract the “loose and democratic views” of ministry, entertained by the Brethren elsewhere. The remarkable passage just quoted, fully confirms what had been previously stated, that the liberty of ministry at Plymouth was in a modified form, and that there was a system there differing from the practices of the Brethren elsewhere. There could be no real freedom where three or four individuals acted as critics on “rising gifts;” and it is quite plain that there was virtually established at Plymouth a theological censorship, of which Mr. Newton was the head. The “rising gifts,” in order to “rise,” must satisfy the censors; and with that fact, avowed by Mr. Newton, the consequences were inevitable, it produced an organization, which Mr. Newton says, “they had never found to fail.”

Now it is certain that many of the chief Brethren elsewhere were not ignorant of these things. Mr. Darby has himself stated, in one of his publications, that he was acquainted with Mr. Newton’s thoughts on ministry many years ago, and others also understood the difference that existed; but, nevertheless, in those days, parties disagreeing on such important points could sustain uninterrupted harmony; principles of still higher value seemed at that time to be sufficient to avert the separation that has since taken place.

Years, however, rolled on, and another spirit arose amongst them. Mr. Newton had founded his authority on a firm basis at Plymouth; the numbers in communion there became very great; his influence amongst the communicants was unlimited; and, with authority and popularity, a wider sphere for action was opened, and the power and the will were not wanting to bring other “gatherings” within the spiritual jurisdiction of Plymouth.

Mr. Newton’s disciples, even more eager than himself for the extension of his influence, began with zeal to push his views, and publish portions of his sermons; and a question now arose among the Brethren, very general in the West of England, whether they should accept or reject “Newton’s Views of Prophecy.”

As it is our object in these pages to take a retrospect of *events* amongst the Brethren, we, as much as possible, abstain from a discussion of doctrine; and to the Appendix we must refer the readers for the statements requisite for a full understanding of the collision that has taken place on doctrinal points. In this place, therefore, we only briefly notice, that Mr. Newton’s views were at that time understood to differ from those of the leading Brethren chiefly on the details of the premillennial advent. They generally held that the Church would be removed in the first resurrection, be *secretly* taken away from the wicked world to meet their returning Lord, who would then come with the Church to punish his enemies, and reign for a thousand years with the Saints over the earth in millennial glory. Moreover, they expected this great event of the Lord was close at hand, and might be expected any day, and that it was frustrating the hopes of the Church to be looking for the intervention of certain events before the release of the Church. Mr. Newton earnestly denied [7] the “secret rapture of the Saints,” as it was technically termed, and taught that a long series of definite events, predicted in the Scripture, must first take place before the premillennial advent. This is the mere popular and superficial view of the case; the details and the ramifications of these contrary opinions are intricate, and lead to perplexing questions. There are points to be settled about “the remnant,” “the position of the Church in the heavenlies,” and many other abstruse inquiries. Consequences and deductions have been anticipated in certain statements which on the first view, would seem simple enough; and doctrine and prophecy have become entangled in a manner to surprise and alarm the uninitiated. The opponents found in one another’s prophetic views most mischievous tendencies; Mr. Newton denounced* the corollaries fairly to be deduced, so he said, from the opinions of Mr. Darby’s school; and Mr. Darby detected a whole nest of errors and unsound statements in Mr. Newton’s prophetic scheme. In the meantime, Mr. Newton’s school was continually on the increase, and disciples were added to him daily. The activity of his friends never relaxed, and the Brethren began very generally to feel that Newtonianism was now a definite something, differing from that which had been established, and of such an aggressive nature, that to escape a collision with it required no small tact and prudence. The stir becoming general, Mr. Darby, who was then on the Continent, was invited to come to Plymouth, by some who did not approve of the progress of events there; and thus that controversy commenced, the end of which it would not be easy at present to predict.

The first grave fact that resulted from the collision of the chief antagonists – and this collision was formidable – was an open separation and schism in the body, – a second†

* “He assiduously insisted that we denied the Gospels, redemption through the blood as to some, life in the Old Testament Saints, and that the fundamentals of Christianity were in question.” (“Narrative of Facts,” by J. N. Darby, p. 37.)

† “I began to break bread (in a separate place of meeting), and the first Sunday there were fifty or sixty.” (“Narrative of Facts,” p. 56.) This event took place December 27, 1845.

table was spread at Plymouth; the one body became two, and two streets henceforward designated the unhappy parties, now arranged against one another in irreconcilable hostility. Thus the talisman was broken that had bound the Brethren together with a mysterious spell; and a discord of sentiment terminated in the very vulgar result of a corporate division, – controversy, in short, operated amongst the Brethren, as it has in countless other instances, by elaborating two new sects, well defined, enthusiastic for their own opinions, and repelled from one another with a vehemence in proportion to their former proximity.

Then began all the evils of religious quarrel, and to the previous love and toleration now succeeded a merciless intolerance and incurable antipathy. This system went to such a pitch, that, in one case, under the exciting “influence of Sisters, a poor man refused to dine with his wife if she did not come to Ebrington-street (Mr. Newton’s); and when she wished to go and hear, in the evening, at Raleigh-street (Mr. Darby’s), said he would be master: she is now in Ebrington-street.” (Narrative, p. 58.) If this anecdote is correct, it is a specimen of the spirit that prevailed on *both* sides; it was by no means confined to only one party. Bitter accusations, personal animosities, domestic feuds, and the disruption of old friendships, were the inevitable consequences where a body lately one was separating, and where the members of that body were arranging themselves under opposite banners. The worst motives* were imputed, the most unfriendly interpretations put upon words and actions; religious sentiment was criticised with unsparing severity, every whisper of infamy industriously circulated, every hint of suspicion eagerly improved, and every failure of conduct joyfully published. There was one there also who inoculated the combatants with his own fierceness; he was the genius of the storm, the “cloud-compeller” of the tempest. The bitterness of his language gave a tone to the quarrel, and impressed a peculiar character on it which it has ever since retained.

It was not long, moreover, before the two sections mutually excommunicated one another, and extended that excommunication to any visiting brother, who might happen to break bread with the interdicted party; thus, in fact, throwing to the winds the original bond of union, that the only term of communion was an acknowledgment of Christ as the Saviour.

No proof can be greater, that religious animosity is at its height, than when neutrality in a controversy is treated as an unpardonable crime; it is a deep degradation of the Christian name and character, a manifestation of that spirit of revenge which will allow nothing peaceful, nothing *unlike itself*, to be in its neighbourhood – but to this hour, this is the spirit that still animates this unholy strife.

If we are to believe the accusations mutually brought by the two parties, their moral condition must indeed have been deplorable; but it is far less dishonoring to the accusers on both sides, to attribute these accusations to the excitement of controversy and party wrath, than to listen to such wholesale charges of falsehood, dishonesty, and malice. Neither do we profess the least to credit those more mysterious imputations of Satanical inspiration and direction, which are so freely put forth by the *philosophers* of this controversy, in their endeavours to account for the phenomena of an opposition that has given

* Mr. Newton’s words: “There have been falsehood and misrepresentation to an extent I could not have believed before the late events.” Mr. Darby’s words: “The expressions are dishonestly charged, they are untrue. Mr. Newton’s personal veracity is openly and fairly impeached. Mr. N.’s veracity has been impeached; I impeached it. (Narrative, 60, 61, 62.) I find that the system of untruth and finesse was undermining the probity and truthfulness of mind of others, and demoralizing God’s dear children. (73.) I am aware of the influence Mr. N. exercises over many minds; but I do not hesitate to say, that I had rather see my child die, than be under the moral influence that rules at Ebrington-street.” (78.)

them so much trouble. It is quite possible to explain all the phenomena by the usual operations of religious antipathy, and by the well-known weaknesses of the human mind, without going to the bottomless pit for the solution.

But here a question may arise, how did it come to pass that this great rupture took place so late in the day, when all the points of grievance had been long known to the Brethren? The offences imputed to Mr. Newton* [9] *at that time* were his views and arrangements with regard to ministry, which were said to be subverting the whole fabric of distinctive principle amongst the Brethren, and his interpretation of prophecy: now, in whatever degree he was an offender on these two heads, he had been so for a long time. Mr. Darby tells us, that he was acquainted with Mr. Newton's thoughts on ministry some years before the rupture took place, and certainly, Mr. Newton's prophetic speculations had for a long time been no secret; why then did the Brethren, certainly not ignorant of these things, supinely or timidly allow the evil to advance? or why, at last, did they so violently attack that which had grown up by their sufferance and permission? If it was right at the last thus to turn all things upside down in order to effect a remedy, it could not have been right to allow the evil to make its progress without opposition or attempt at restraint. Either the indolence of the Brethren is condemned by their subsequent energy, or their energy is condemned by their previous apathy.

But from this a lesson may be learned, that if the Brethren wish to save themselves from impending ruin, they must arouse themselves to meet evil when it is conspicuous, and may possibly be counteracted; not wait till it is gaining the mastery, and is so formidable as to be incurable by any method short of a general convulsion.

It is impossible that the experiment of new divisions can be attempted with safety, if, therefore, they desire that any corporate testimony should be sustained, they must neither quail under intimidation at first, nor be carried away by blind passion and terror at last. Evils far greater than those introduced by Mr. Newton, are now arising from an opposite quarter; if the Brethren are not able or are not willing to meet them, they must succumb, and breaking up generally in all the gatherings, honestly confess that they have attempted that which has been beyond their power to sustain; and that the corporate union of Christians, on the principle which they profess, has now become impossible.

But we resume the thread of our historical references. After the public division at Plymouth, the most prominent event was the publication by Mr. Darby of a "Narrative of the Facts connected with the Separation of the Writer from the Congregation meeting in Ebrington Street."

The religious world has rarely seen such a publication as this, for it would indeed be difficult to find condensed within the compass of eighty pages so many and such heavy accusations, interspersed with so many galling remarks. The language, as is usual with that writer, is obscure, elliptical, and uncouth; the sentences brief and hurried, and the general style so careless that sometimes the grammatical construction is disregarded. But the object was to heap together accusations, and certainly the writer has presented a mass of criminations, bearing hard upon many individuals, and especially on Mr. Newton, whose character he assails without measure and without mercy. Mr. Darby does not scruple to charge his antagonist with deliberate falsehood, and that repeatedly. "Mr. Newton's per-

* When Mr. Darby left the meeting at Ebrington Street, he gave his reasons for so doing, in the following words, – "I felt that God was practically displaced, and more particularly that there was a subversion of the principles on which we met; that there was evil and unrighteousness unconfessed and unjudged; and as a collateral point, that the Friday Meeting, which was a means of inquiry and service, had been suppressed, and refused to be restored." – *Narrative*, 43.

sonal veracity,” he says, “is openly and fairly impeached; Mr. Newton’s veracity has been impeached, I impeached it.” This certainly is startling language, and in the world is considered so intolerable, that it never is heard amongst gentlemen, without a previous intention to sustain the allegation by an appeal to arms. Now, if Mr. Darby has merged his character of gentleman, in the superior attributes of the saint, one, of course, [10] looks for the expressions of sanctity in his language; and, therefore, whatever may be his zeal, we still must expect from him “that all bitterness, and wrath, clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from him, with all malice;” and we cannot but express our astonishment that he should indulge in such outrages of style, when his great object was to prove “that God had been practically displaced.” If we suppose ourselves elevated above the world’s code of honour, let us not sink beneath its courtesies, and because we are saints, let us not descend into the unrestrained practices of the rabble.

Mr. Darby begins his “Narrative,” with a proposition, always sustained by him and his disciples, that “a direct and positive work of Satan,” had been going on at Plymouth, and that, consequently, Mr. Newton, and his adherents, were instruments of the devil to do his will. The same opinion has appeared again with additional violence in Mr. Wigram’s pamphlets, and so much has been said and written on this subject, that a species of Satanology almost as absurd as a belief in witches, has been introduced amongst the Brethren, and that with such serious and earnest credulity, that a person in their communion who should openly venture to express a disbelief in this direct diabolical agency, would run great hazard of being himself treated as an “agent of Satan.”

“I believe fully,” says Mr. Darby, “that the work which has resulted in, what I may call in its present state, Ebrington Street, is a direct and positive work of Satan: I mean, simply and solemnly what I say.” (Narrative 2.) And again, “I have not the least doubt, from circumstances I have heard lately, of the authenticity of which I have not the smallest doubt, that Mr. Newton received his prophetic system *by direct inspiration of Satan*, analogous to the Irvingite delusion.” – *Plain Statement of the Sufferings of the Lord*, p. 16. Again, “I am perfectly satisfied that the persons here in question, over whom I sorrow, are direct instruments of Satan; that their work is the work of a *seducing spirit*, to which many may, and several have given heed, – I repeat it, of a seducing spirit or devil.” – *Summary of Meetings*.

Assertions of this sort are not unfrequent, and they should be carefully noticed, in order to comprehend some striking phenomena in this controversy, which would otherwise be unintelligible. When once the mind has been induced to adopt this hideous notion, all the acts of the person supposed thus to be under the Satanical possession, will appear always suspicious, even when they do not seem to be positively and flagrantly wicked – to be bent upon evil is the necessary tendency of unfortunate creatures so circumstanced. Deceit and fraud will therefore be detected in their most casual words or actions, and a malignant and mischievous intention will be supposed to influence every counsel, and to be the ground-work of every suggestion, even when the malice is not apparent.

The souls of the possessed will seem to be prone to a continually-augmenting iniquity, and an inherent aversion to all that is true and good, will be deemed a necessary ingredient of their moral being. Hence it will become a duty to mistrust their actions, and sift their words, in order to detect the latent evil: the worst possible constructions will be made on their language; if they omit to express a matter fully, the omission will appear a design; what they say will be proclaimed bad, but what they omit to say, still worse; if they do that which is right, it will be with a [11] sinister purpose, if they seem to do anything wrong, it will be an exhibition of that Satanical influence which they cannot wholly

conceal; and thus, let them speak, or be silent, act, or abstain from action, they must be condemned.

This, we say, is the consequence of this grim superstition, and the proof is abundant, in the publications directed against Mr. Newton, that such feelings as these are fully entertained by his opponents. Take the following specimens, a few amongst many. "I don't know one who has embraced systematically, this (*i. e.* Mr. Newton's) system, that has not fallen into open and systematic untruth; some of them persons, I gladly add, as incapable of it *as any of us* (!), as to their habits as men. BUT IF SATAN BE USING THEM IN THE FLESH, WHAT CAN BE EXPECTED? why, that the simplest and most unpractised would commit themselves the most, and so it has been. Now the simplest can understand that falsehood, deliberate falsehood, is not of God. In my judgment, when the matter is brought forward, and at work, when the doctrine of Satan is at work, it would be sin and unfaithfulness to withhold the proofs that it is of Satan." – *Summary of the Meetings in London, v.*

"We shall find another characteristic mark of Satan, *borrowing* recognized and blessed truths, and using them, perverted in their application, or as the means of introducing something, beyond which is not suspected, to subvert fundamental truth." – (*vi. id.*) With this canon of criticism, we shall be able to understand much of Mr. Darby's last controversy with Mr. Newton; it is a passage, therefore, not to be forgotten. Again, "the truth is, the soul is not, when under this influence (for it may be upright in other things) at all in the presence of God, and sees everything in the light of *the object which governs it*; and as to these things, the discerning between right and wrong, the influence of the enemy has supplanted and taken the place of conscience. I am satisfied I have seen these principles distinctly at work in what has produced the system established at Plymouth." – *Narrative 10.*

It would seem, then, that the possessed may be honest men in the ordinary transactions of life; they may buy and sell without cheating, and speak the truth in the market and the forum; but, if it be a question of religion, they have no conscience left, for the enemy "has supplanted and taken the place of conscience." All this should be known and remembered, for it will be a key to some curious things, to be noticed presently.

We may dismiss the "Narrative of Facts," with observing, that, as by far the greater number of the "facts" therein chronicled are to us unknown, we neither affirm nor deny them. Several have been called in question but of the whole we may say safely, that it is presented in such a manner to the public, with such insufficiency of proof and logical indifference, and in so many instances on the authority of mere reports, that no one acquainted with the nature of evidence, could accept the statements in their present form: they may be true, but it is the fault of the narrator that they do not convincingly appear to be so. For historical purposes, the Narrative is little better than a Mythos.

The next event of importance, illustrating these observations, was an attempt by the Brethren in London to induce Mr. Newton to appear before the body of the Brethren in Rawstorne-street, where the chief London meetings are held, "to give an explanation of late events." This curious [12] interlude took place towards the close of 1846, and as the whole affair was conducted by both parties in a manner peculiarly their own, we subjoin some of the principal documents.

"Rawstorne-street, Nov. 10, 1846.

"DEAR BROTHER, –

"Having been informed at our meeting for prayer this morning, that some of our Brethren have invited you to attend a meeting of the saints, (the importance and necessity of which, for the Lord's honour, we feel,) for the purpose of considering before the Lord

the unhappy circumstances that have arisen amongst us; and as it is understood that you have expressed your readiness to meet the saints, and to answer any questions on the above subjects, we earnestly request you to inform us when and where you will do so.”

That Mr. Newton should accept this agreeable invitation was to the last degree improbable, since, besides many other obvious reasons, he well knew the feeling and intentions of the proposed court of inquiry. He was not the simpleton to walk into this genteel trap. Mr. Newton met the proposal in *his* way – not by a plain and downright refusal, which his position, as one already under Mr. Darby’s ban, entitled him to send to the meeting at Rawstorne-street – he did not tell them that the proposal was a grave comedy, as both parties perfectly well understood that communion no longer existed between them – he did not boldly take a high and independent position, and repel their invitation by a stern negative, but, after a series of epistolary fencings, conducted by his four compurgators, his faithful adherents, “declined to attend the proposed meeting, as entirely opposed to the directions of the word of God.” On this the Brethren ultimately sent the following letter: –

“London, Dec. 18, 1846.

“*Beloved Brother,* –

“The saints at Rawstorne-street, with some other Brethren present and concurring, having received your refusal to meet their request, now communicate to you, *with the utmost sorrow and pain*, that they feel precluded meeting you in fellowship at the table of the Lord, until the matters in question have been fairly and fully investigated. In this communication the congregation at Rawstorne-street do not express any judgment on the matter charged, but simply *on the fact of your refusal*: they need not say with what joy they would welcome any change in your disposition in this matter.

“We remain, *dear Brother,*

“*Affectionately yours in Christ.*”

This document of exclusion is chiefly remarkable for its questionable sincerity; for, 1st. It must have been a strong presumption, if not a moral certainty, from the first, that Mr. Newton would not accept their invitation. 2nd. The sensation of “utmost sorrow and pain” they profess to feel in pronouncing sentence of exclusion, it is by no means easy to believe: did they not rather secretly rejoice that they had thus, as they supposed, brought the Leviathan into a dilemma? 3rd. The exclusion was a ceremonious plausibility; it had no reality in it, as they knew full well that Mr. Newton would on no account trouble them with his presence at [13] the Lord’s table, as little as they themselves would go to his table at Plymouth. 4th. The expression of joy with which they profess to be ready to welcome Mr. Newton if he would alter his determination, is surely for scenic effect, and to decorate the period, for they knew he would do nothing of the sort. This, therefore, as well as the endearing titles of affection, there can be no difficulty in estimating. And yet, ludicrously enough, they all the while forgot that by these expressions of ceremonious regret, they were undoing Mr. Darby’s work, and disregarding his judgment. Mr. Newton had a twelvemonth before been disowned by Mr. Darby – in fact, had been put out of communion – and yet they indiscreetly assure Mr. Newton, that they could meet him in fellowship “at the table of the Lord,” if it was not for the fact of his refusal to attend their proposed interview: moreover, they carefully assure him, they “*do not express any judgment on the matter charged*” – that is, they do not confirm the sentence of exclusion of Mr. Darby; and thus, with blunder upon blunder, in their anxiety to strike a blow, they render nugatory all that had been previously done in the separation effected at Plymouth.

And now at last we are enabled to answer the question, “In what way do the Brethren, embarrassed as they obviously must be with their theory of *the ruined Church*,* meet the difficulties that must arise, when congregations are formed of adherents to their views?” We see their method. So far from feeling any scruples on the score of deficient authority, they exercise discipline with a high hand; they constitute courts of inquiry, and courts of appeal; and if a Brother does not attend their summons, they put him out of communion on the score of contumacy: that is, because the Brother does not submit himself to their authority. “We do not,” say they, “express any judgment on the matter charged, but simply on the *fact of your refusal*.” Simple enough this is; it is as energetic as judicial power ever pretends to be, and is precisely analagous [sic] to proclaiming a man an outlaw because he does not appear in court to submit to the authority of the law. Neither is to be forgotten that the meeting at Rawstorne-street constituted itself a court of appeal, for they summoned Mr. Newton to answer inquiries on “matters charged,” and already judged, as worthy of excommunication by Mr. Darby, They [sic] were not satisfied with his judgment, but were ready to confirm or quash it as the evidence might seem to require. Now all this is authority of the highest class, and natural enough it is that they should fall into the idea of erecting a metropolitan court of appeal, for it is a very convenient method to quiet provincial disturbances, and is well calculated to secure order and subdue the unruly; [14] but is this verifying the humble theory of “the twos and threes?” Is this any testimony to the “Church in ruins?” Is this persuading us that they believe their own solemn assertions, “POWER, THE CHURCH HAS NONE?”† With such facts as these before us, we are therefore able to answer the question.

But what will “the Sects” say to all this? They know nothing about these “dispensational truths,” and are ignorant of the “ruined condition of the Church;” and therefore without scruple they exercise discipline and enact laws, though it must be a rare case indeed when they pass sentence for contumacy; but *they* have been sharply reprovved by the Brethren for Church-making and choosing officers, “because the Church is in ruins.” Now they have an opportunity for beholding those who rebuked them acting vigorously, as if the Church were in its integrity, and putting forth all the energies of the healthy and entire body! What, then, may this “ruined condition” be? they will inquire. In truth we

* “Churches have been merged in the mass of ecclesiastical popular hierarchism, and lost; and the visible Church, as a whole, has been merged there too.” “When there is an attempt at displaying the position and unity, there will always be a failure; God will not take such a place with us – we must get into the place of his mind to get his strength; that is now the failure of the Church – there he will be with us.” “We are the witnesses of the weakness and low state of the Church; we are not stronger nor better than others, Dissenters, &c.; but we only own our bad and lost state, and therefore can find blessing.” “Government of bodies in an authorized way, we believe, there is none. Where this is assumed, there will be confusion.” “It is especially the order of the governmental part which we believe has failed, and that we are to get on without, at least in a formal way. For our part, when we found all in ruin around us, our comfort was the promise, that when two or three were gathered together in Christ’s name, there he would be. It was not government or anything else we sought.” – *Principles of the Brethren*, [sic]

† “Ruined Condition of the Church,” by J. N. Darby. It is instructive to observe Mr. Darby, in other parts of his works, so entirely forgetting his favourite maxim. “I appeal,” says he, “to all who tried to effect it, whether they secured the investigation of alleged evil, as they sought it *before the Church of God*: the holiness of the Church of God is then given up. I think it a very sad thing, a very great evil, when anything of the kind has to be brought before the Church at large: *it is the extreme case of discipline*.” – *Narrative*, p. 62. So, then, “the whole Church at large” *is* in a condition to exercise extreme discipline! And what this “whole Church at large” be? The Narrative will explain that.

cannot tell them. It is something very solemnly asserted in the writings, but more solemnly contradicted by the actions of the Brethren.

We shall presently find that authority is asserted in a still higher degree by the Brethren; for they have gone on, under Mr. Darby's auspices, to issue a general prospective sentence of excommunication against any, or all in communion, who may frequent or acknowledge gatherings in which there are any suspected persons. This is, indeed, the very craziness of usurped power; but to that they have come, and by what means we shall ere long see.

An interval of five weeks elapsed between the citation of Mr. Newton and his exclusion; a period in which the labours of the two parties were unremitting in meeting, counselling, proposing, and corresponding. The last scene was the publication of a well-written document by Mr. Newton's party, "A Remonstrance and Protest, addressed to the Saints at Rawstorne-street, London, respecting the late act of excluding Mr. Newton from the Lord's Table," bearing the date, December 25, 1846. This was signed, as usual, by the four secretaries; but if we may judge by the polish and dignity of the style, it was probably written by an abler pen than they could command. The arguments of the protest are clear, and forcibly put; but the whole of it is, nevertheless, as artificial and insincere as anything issued by their opponents. "In real sorrow of heart," they say, "we lay before you what appears to be the nature of your last action.["] Now this "real sorrow of heart" was something much more like *heartfelt satisfaction* for the evident advantage gained over their antagonists, since the very object that suited their case had been obtained; Mr. Newton had, on plausible grounds, declined the "invitation," and his opponents had been led into the blunder of excluding him for reasons which could not be sustained, without introducing a precedent for a violent [15] and arbitrary government in "the Church." All this the "Remonstrance" points out with perspicuity; and, indeed, the offence of Mr. Newton was absolutely nothing, so absurdly had they managed the whole transaction. The meeting at Rawstorne-street had but *invited* Mr. Newton to meet them. "We hear you have expressed your readiness to meet us. Will you come?" "No, I thank you," was the reply; "I decline the honour." "Very well, then, we exclude you from communion." An act which proved nothing but their desire to punish, when the means of inflicting the punishment were difficult to be obtained.

After this tumult, there was for a season a calm; the natural alternation of langour succeeded to an unusual excitement, and the two parties withdrew with an appearance of that melancholy sort of tranquillity which exists between two friends, who having quarrelled, separate never to see or to speak to one another again. But a new event in due time revived the slumbering spirit of controversy, and a fire was kindled to extend to other places its ravages, the extent of which no one can calculate.

Before, however, we enter into an examination of this last catastrophe, we would pause a moment to express an opinion on that which has been already recorded.

By reference to the previous statements, it will be seen that Mr. Newton had for a long time (he himself dates it from the very commencement) entertained views on ministry not in accordance with those held by the Brethren. This is undeniable; for we have his own declaration, in which he finds fault with the liberty of ministry held elsewhere, as "loose and democratic:" and we, moreover, see his peculiar method for counteracting that which he disapproved. Now, of course, it was open to him, if he saw the matter in this light, and if he conscientiously disapproved of unreserved liberty of ministry, and preferred a modified Presbyterian Church, to follow the dictates of his conscience, to establish what he approved, and to oppose that from which he dissented. But then it behoved him to act in such a way as that no one might mistake his intentions, or misinterpret his

opinions; for it was a subject not to conceal, it was matter of that importance, that it required to be fully and fairly understood: his disciples could, with justice, require a clear explanation of his views, and those Brethren from whom he differed could as justly, also, demand a clear explanation. This was not the course pursued by Mr. Newton; the question of ministry was one disguised and *managed* at Plymouth; liberty of ministry, as generally understood by the Brethren, was not really admitted there; and yet those who were in communion, and those who came as casual visitors, had rarely any suspicion that Plymouth differed in this respect from any of the gatherings elsewhere. Now this seems to us established beyond dispute; and, therefore, we come to the conclusion, that Mr. Newton was, in this respect, deficient in that sincerity which is the best ground for confidence. Our desire to judge every thing with strict impartiality will by no means permit us to express any other opinion.

The second great controversy between the two parties was excited by the discovery of opinions militating with established orthodoxy in the teaching of Mr. Newton and his assistants, and to this hour the uproar of that discovery continues.

The alarm was first given by Mr. Harris, who, before the contention was introduced into Plymouth, had been Mr. Newton's coadjutor, and, we [16] may say (for it is an expression not inappropriate to their ecclesiastical arrangements), his *co-pastor*. He had withdrawn* from communion after the assault made on the Plymouth system by Mr. Darby, being fully persuaded that that system was at variance with known principles of the Brethren. His secession was, indeed, the most formidable of the misfortunes Mr. Newton had to encounter; for though, in the excitement of party strife, Mr. Newton's adherents professed to disregard the secession, it was felt by all impartial and thinking minds that the departure of one whose character stood so high, and who had so long been Mr. Newton's fellow-labourer, was a plain proof that there must be something in the arrangements and practices of Plymouth that required a searching investigation.

The full force of this blow was, however, mitigated by the effects of Mr. Darby's impetuosity, who, by the violence of his opposition, made many stand aloof; for so severe and unrestrained was the language of this gentleman in working out the controversy, that several were, by this excess of antagonism, driven into a position which, without this stimulus, they would never have assumed; and to this hour there are many [sic] honourable and upright characters, and many devoted Christians, who stand aloof, not because they are Newtonians, but because they cannot endure dogmatic violence, and shrink from all show of injustice and religious oppression.

Mr. Harris drew the attention of the Brethren to the questionable doctrine of Mr. Newton, by publishing *Strictures on a Lecture of that gentleman*, then recently printed. This lecture had been taken down in notes by one or other of Mr. Newton's hearers, and after passing from one hand to another, was published at Exeter by Mr. M'Adam, though without the knowledge of Mr. Newton, or without inquiring if the lecture really contained his sentiments. This was in June or July, 1847, and this was the commencement of the controversy on the person of the Redeemer.

In reply to the strictures of Mr. Harris, Mr. Newton published his "Observations," on a Tract entitled "The Sufferings of Church [= Christ], as set forth in a Lecture on Psalm vi., considered, by B. W. Newton." Plymouth. In the Introduction Mr. Newton says, "About eighteen months ago, I was giving lectures on some of the Psalms. Notes of one of these

* Mr. Harris publicly bade adieu to the Brethren at Plymouth, November 14, 1845, after having laboured amongst them for thirteen years.

having been taken, not in shorthand, by one of those present, were afterwards copied and lent by the possessor to some of her friends. I never saw one line of these notes, nor indeed knew of their existence (though aware that such notes were often taken), until I heard that they were read and severely censured in a meeting convened in Exeter for the purpose. Shortly afterwards they were published; accompanied by the strictures on which I now comment. This was done without any communication having been made to me, and therefore, no opportunity was offered me of avowing or disavowing any of the sentiments, or of rendering any explanation, or even giving any judgment as to the accuracy of the notes.”

We may judge by this of the spirit of enmity that was then at work. In their anxiety to bring Mr. Newton into condemnation, they disregarded the courtesies and proprieties which are usually respected in society.

The events of the next two months, seem to have been closely connected [17] with this controversy thus excited, but being of a private nature amongst the party at Ebrington Street, all that we are able to record, is the startling fact, that towards the close of November a tract was published by Mr. Newton, acknowledging that he had been in error in some important statements relating to the person of Christ; and before the close of December, 1847, similar retractions and confessions were published [sic] by Mr. Newton's most prominent supporters, Messrs. Saltau [sic], Batten, and Dyer; not without some touching expressions of sorrow, for having been led away into views so erroneous. (See Appendix.) They in fact seceded from Mr. Newton, and he himself withdrew from Plymouth, to which he has not since returned.

The date of Mr. Newton's retreat is, December, 1847, one of the most remarkable events in the annals of the Brethren.

Here, then, Mr. Newton's opponents were unexpectedly in the ascendant, whilst he thus withdrew from the seat of his power and influence. After Mr. Newton retired from Plymouth, he published some other tracts containing further explanations on the grave questions which had brought on this catastrophe – these publications Mr. Darby has assailed in his usual manner, exhibiting considerable sagacity in detecting the logical and verbal inaccuracies of his opponent, but bringing to bear also on the argument, extreme suspicion and ill will, – taking frequent advantage of imperfect expressions; insisting [sic] upon latent meanings of words and sentences which it is by no means certain ought to be attributed to the author – enlarging upon omissions, and denouncing them as dangerous intentions and dark designs – interspersed with insinuations of Satanical influence – and in every possible way pursuing the unfortunate writer, with a fixedness of antipathy that must have a tendency to produce a re-action in minds where party-feeling has not effaced the sentiments of generosity and candour.

It is not, however, for us to sit as umpires in this debate; we prefer the method of publishing the most important passages of Mr. Newton's tracts in the Appendix, in order that those who are competent, may judge for themselves; but we may add, that there is a tone of thought in Mr. Newton's publications not to our taste. We see in them an unrestrained indulgence of a tragical imagination, that impresses upon them, indeed, a peculiar character, but is not for edification; and which unquestionably in any person would be good ground for anxiety, when the subjects under discussion are the doctrines of revealed religion, or the explanations of prophecy. Take, for example, this writer's "Thoughts on the Apocalypse," and see with what ingenuity he has there moulded the Scriptures, and how dexterously he has managed the formidable difficulties which he had to encounter in

carrying out his *favourite idea. The doctrinal questions [18] mixed up in his Apocalyptic interpretations are another matter, for they refer to knotty points of dispensational truth discussed no where but amongst the Brethren; we speak not of those questions, but refer to the general tone of thought observable in most of his publications. As for the present controversy, it is undeniable that he had got wrong in his doctrine of the Redeemer's sufferings; this he has acknowledged; the remainders of that profound question not yet adjusted, require no little aptitude for abstract reasoning – no superficial acquaintance with metaphysical argument, that they may be duly examined. The disputants have got into the most inaccessible of all regions, the first idea of person, identity, and being; and all the ineffable obscurities of the hypostatic union. In these cloudy altitudes heresy may be charged with safety, for as very few will be able to comprehend the subject, the docility of the partisan will amply make amends for theological and metaphysical incapacity, and where a leader of a party condemns, the party will be ready to confirm the sentence without understanding the accusation. It is in vain for Mr. Newton to write and explain; it is in vain for him to protest, and to attempt to prove his orthodox intentions; it is all lost time for him to invoke the Athanasian and Nicene Creeds, and to profess his readiness to subscribe the most approved symbols, and to abide by the decisions of the fathers and doctors of the church; the mysterious accusation of his enemies renders all this nugatory, for he speaks and writes under the direct inspiration of an evil spirit – a devil – and therefore it is impossible that he should be right. Moreover, an exasperated and intolerant party has a direct interest that he should be wrong, so that a heretic he must be till time, that slowly disperses the clouds of prejudice, and removes angry parties from the scene, shall enable another people, a stranger to this strife, to investigate the question, undisturbed by affection on one hand, or hatred on the other.

In the meanwhile we gladly give our testimony to Mr. Newton's calm and dignified demeanour under the unusual trials that have come upon him. The provocations he has received have been exceeding great, the accusations unscrupulous and of the worst description, the insults unlimited; and all this has been going on for years without pity or abatement, without the slightest recognition that he ever has been esteemed a Christian, a gentleman, and a friend, or one who for several years was highly esteemed amongst the Brethren. His opponents have forgotten all that he once was to themselves and to others, nay, they have almost ceased to remember, that he is of the human species; and yet amidst all this indescribable violence, and these multiplied vexations and distresses, no angry word has ever escaped him, no tart reply or expression of irritation ever for a moment disturbed the unruffled placidity of his most courteous pamphlets. His enemies have, on several occasions, laid themselves open to severe thrusts, but he has withheld his arm; and when the sword had fallen from the hands of his antagonists, he has disregarded the

* This favourite idea is the restoration of the city Babylon on the banks of the Euphrates, which is to become the Babylon of the Apocalypse, and the metropolis of the civilized earth. It is curious to see Mr. Newton writing against himself, by anticipation, in an earlier period of his investigations.

“Does then Matt. xxiv. contain an allusion to the past destruction of Jerusalem? I reply, that when two events of a similar kind are predicted, the mind of the prophet rests on and describes the greater, because the description of the greater will necessarily include the less. Thus in Isaiah xiii, the expressions in verses 9–13, sufficiently prove that the mind of the prophet was resting on a greater destruction than that of the Euphratean city, and that the yet future destruction of *the mystic Babylon* will alone ex- [18] haust the fulness of the description. The other is included in it, as the less is included in the greater. The Old Testament is often referred to in the Revelations, taking up the same expressions, but in a sense *either completely contrasted, or very essentially different.*” – Investigator, ii. 55. From a Paper signed B. W. N., Plymouth. June 15, 1832.

advantage, and honourably sustained the lofty dignities of the gentleman and the philosopher. As we have rarely seen the like of the animosity of his enemies, [19] so we have rarely seen the like of his personal possession, and imperturbable serenity. In this respect he is a pattern to controversialists; and if the names of the Plymouth Brethren shall endure long enough to secure a page in history, then in this quarrel, which is, unhappily, the most prominent part of their existence, Mr. Newton's conduct, as seen in his writings, will form a striking and noble contrast with the vulgar warfare of his intemperate adversaries.

It was not probable that matters, having advanced so far as we have brought them in this retrospect, should rest there; a fire had been kindled, and any accidental breeze might fan it into a flame. In the early part of the summer of 1848, or perhaps a little earlier, some of the friends of Mr. Newton came to Bristol, and were admitted, according to the usual custom of the Brethren, to communion with the congregation meeting at Bethesda Chapel, in Bristol. Their appearance was, as might be expected, distasteful to those there who had warmly entered into the controversy, and had caught the contagion of the polemical fever. Many objections were raised, and a great deal said and done, which it is not in our power to narrate; but it ended in Bristol, as it had previously done in Plymouth, with an open schism, and the spreading of a second table: thus a new sect sprung up here also, or, as some would state it, that which had been one sect before now became two.

This division seems to have had its commencement independently of Mr. Darby; for so he* states in his "Circular," which he published after these events, without date, either of time or place, but sent forth from Yorkshire about the third week in August, 1848.

Mr. Darby's "Circular," as careless a paper as ever was printed, and, like his "Narrative of Facts," containing many allegations without any proof but his own simple assertion, is, nevertheless, perhaps the most important document that has ever yet appeared amongst the Brethren; for it has, in fact, cancelled their fundamental principle of communion, and changed the whole body, once supposed to be catholic in the fullest sense of the word, into a rigid and intolerant sect.

Thus the "Circular" begins: "I feel bound to present to you the case of Bethesda. It involved, to my mind, the whole question of association with Brethren; and for the very simple reason, that if there is incapacity to keep out that *which has been recognized as the work and power of Satan*, and to guard the beloved sheep of Christ against it, – if Brethren are incapable of this service to Christ, then they *ought not to be in any way owned as a body* to whom such service is confided; and their gatherings would be really a trap laid to ensnare the sheep."

The first proposition is based on the axiom, that the object of Mr. Darby's opposition is "the work and power of Satan," – it has been "recognized" as such; that is, Mr. Darby and his imitators have asserted it till they believed it, and then, having believed it, it is made by him a lever for excommunicating all the gatherings that do not believe it. This is the Satanology of the Brethren, without which their recent acts of intimidation could not be sustained, nor any of their intolerant deeds accomplished. Thus he goes [20] on: "I press the position of Bethesda on Brethren. It is, at this moment, acting in the fullest and most decided way as the supporter of Mr. Newton, and the evil associated with him, and in the way *in which the Enemy of souls most desires it should be done.*" "Members of Ebrington-street, active and unceasing agents of Mr. Newton, holding and justifying his views, are received at Bethesda; and the system which so many of us have known as de-

* "I had nothing whatever to say to the original movement of the Brethren who objected at Bristol, and was long wholly ignorant of it; but having stated to Mr. Müller that I should gladly go to Bethesda, I was, on hearing the facts, obliged to write and say, I could not."

nying the glory of the Lord Jesus (and that when fully stated in the most offensive way), and *corrupting the moral rectitude of every one that fell under its power*, that this system, though not professed, is fully admitted, and at work at Bethesda.” The merits of the case at Bethesda, and the real facts, will not here be canvassed, as that is a local question; but the reader must by no means take Mr. Darby’s statements as facts; which, we are satisfied, are, in some instances, given without sufficient examination, and in others are very questionable. We pass on to principles, and to matters of general interest. “I go on the broad ground of faithfulness to the whole Church of God and each individual sheep, beloved of Christ, that, as far as we are concerned, they may be guided against what so many of us know to be horribly subversive of His glory and all moral rectitude in the Saints ... I plainly urge upon Brethren, that, *receiving any one from Bethesda* (unless in any exceptional case of ignorance of what has passed,) is opening the door to the infection of the abominable evil, from which, at so much painful cost, we have been delivered. It has been deliberately admitted at Bethesda, under the plea of not investigating it (itself a principle which refuses to watch against roots of bitterness), and really palliated. And if this be admitted, by receiving persons from Bethesda, those doing so are morally identified with the evil; for the body so acting is corporately responsible for the evil they admit. If Brethren think they can admit those who subvert the person and glory of Christ, and principles which have led to so much untruth and dishonesty, it is well they should say so, that those who cannot may know what to do ... For my own part, I could neither go to Bethesda in its present state, nor go where persons from it are knowingly permitted. *I do not wish to reason upon it here*, but lay it before Brethren, and press it on their fidelity to Christ, and their care of his beloved Saints. – J. N. D.”

From these extracts the following conclusions are to be drawn:

1. The thing to be opposed is the work of the devil.
2. If gatherings are “incapable” of “keeping it out,” they are to be disowned as Christian bodies, *i. e.* excommunicated.
3. The gathering at Bethesda has, in different ways, manifested this incapacity; therefore it is excommunicated, or “disowned.”
4. If any gathering admits persons from Bethesda, it is morally identified with the evil, and therefore to be disowned.
5. Mr. Darby personally excommunicates all such.
6. *Corollary*: The gatherings which admit the gatherings that had admitted persons from Bethesda are excommunicated; and so on, *ad infinitum*.
7. *Corollary*: Brothers are personally disowned if they belong to bodies that offend against this decree. Individuals are punished because they belong to bodies “identified with the evil.”

[21] Now hereby it is manifest, that we have a new term of communion for the Brethren; for, if the Circular is to be the rule of action, (and it is already a Shaster with the party,) then it is plain, that besides any inquiry into faith, an inquiry also whether those who are to be admitted into communion, disown Mr. Newton and Bethesda, and all the “disowned” places, must be superadded. “Do you believe with a saving faith?” was the old term of communion of the Brethren. “Do you disown Ebrington-street and Bethesda, &c., &c., &c.,” is the new one. The most devoted Christian, who does not disown Bethesda and all other places under the ban, is hereby excluded; and whole gatherings are excluded that are neutral, and desire to be quiet, and to think of other things. This is the extremity of intolerance; it is not possible to carry the evil farther without personal vio-

lence, such as imprisonment, fire, and sword: *the principle* is pure bigotry – such as has too often darkened the melancholy pages of ecclesiastical history.

Then again, as if the author of this Circular were anxious to promulgate his decree in the most startling terms that could be devised, it is announced that its provisions are directed against “incapacity” – the humblest and least offensive of all negations. This he terms, as indeed it is, “a very simple reason;” nothing can be more simple: “if there is *incapacity* to keep out Satan from the sheep,” then the body in this condition is *to be* disowned.

Poor sheep! with their dangers on the one hand and the other, what are they to do? Has not Mr. Darby taught them, *usque ad nauseam*, that the Church is in ruins, and that they may not appoint their own shepherds, and that the Church has no power left? Does he not know that two-thirds of the gatherings began, in their simplicity, on the oft-repeated assurance that there was abundant blessing for them, if they would “meet simply as believers;” and are not many of the gatherings without any shepherds – that is, without any one to whom oversight could be with reason entrusted? – what, then, are these poor helpless sheep to do? How can “the beloved sheep” rise up with these energies and prerogatives, and this arm of strength, so foreign to their nature, and so contrary to everything that they have been taught to believe of themselves, and thus begin to rival the Pope in the execution of sentences of excision? What can “incapacity” do? How can sheep become judges and executioners, to condemn and execute? How can they enter into the tumults of this clamorous strife? How can they, with their simplicity, feebleness, ignorance, and incapacity, turn out Satan, that roaring lion, and chase Beelzebub into the great deep?

Is the answer to all these questions, the very “simple” one, that if they are labouring under “incapacity,” they can, at any rate, obey the Circular: true, they can do that; but then they have, at least, consciences; and if this unhesitating obedience does not commend itself to their consciences, what then are they to do?

To this, also, the answer is very simple: they must be disowned.

But then, we venture to ask, whence came this vast authority to the author of the Circular? If he *now* adopts such lofty views of the Church’s integrity, prerogatives, and attributes, has he acted in this matter with the consent of the whole Church? We see how these things were wont to be done in the New Testament: when, in the days of the Apostles, it appeared needful to issue a circular to the Church, the Apostles, Elders, and [22] Brethren, came together with one consent, and consulted on the subject, (see Acts xv); and then “they wrote letters after this manner – the Apostles, Elders, and Brethren, send greeting;” and “the Apostles, Elders, and the whole Church, sent chosen men with Paul and Barnabas” to explain to the churches the nature of the circular, and to commend it to the consciences of the Brethren.

But the author of *this* Circular consults, as far as is known, no one but himself: he sends no one to commend and explain his decrees, but by the expeditious method of the post-office, directs his “*verbosa et grandis epistola*” from his retirement, to all those whom it may concern, – the decrees and the penalties being very succinctly contained in one and the same brotherly epistle.

Now who is he, who, in other regions, with high mastery, disregarding Elders, and the Brethren, and the whole Church, claims the right to issue encyclical letters to the faithful, and to threaten a general interdict? Who is he, we ask; and who is there that cannot answer? It is that sceptred Priest, who, enthroned on the superstition of ages, asserts that he is the universal shepherd.

And have, then, the Brethren come to this similitude?

Now mark how the author of the Circular can take up another strain, when he is opposing the pretensions of the party at Ebrington-street. “The Brethren,” says he, “believed the guidance of God could be reckoned upon. Hence they denied the necessity of the other human extreme – the Popish one – of *a clergy settling the matter amongst themselves, and announcing it publicly*, and the Church having nothing to do but to add to its weight by its acts, to *a decision pronounced by the authothority [sic] of others, which they were forced to receive implicitly*, and as a conclusion arrived at for them, which could not be debated. The Brethren denied the necessity of this alternative; they affirmed that the presence of the Spirit of God was in the Church, and that he would guide them, in the faithful love of Christ, to a right end.” – *Account of Proceedings in Rawstorne-street*, iii. 7.

Observe also, how, when it is convenient, the same writer can insist on the necessity of the Church’s assent and counsel: – “The government of the Church is not a setting of points right, but of souls right, and therefore *nothing is done unless the conscience of the Church is carried into the act.*” – *Id.* 5.

And still more strongly, and as if he were seeking, by anticipation, for words to crush his own circular: “To impose a verdict which cannot be debated, is the most monstrous thing that ever was heard of. IT IS PURE UNMASKED POPERY, the Clergy dictating to the conscience of the Church, which can only register and give weight to their decrees: IS THE CONSCIENCE OF THE CHURCH THUS TO BE DISPOSED OF BY OTHERS, BE THEY NEVER SO WISE?” – *Id.* 5.

Who can write so forcibly against the author of the Circular, as the author himself?

It was scarcely possible, however, to publish such a document, without producing mischievous effects; for there was every probability that others would feel called upon to imitate the example thus set them, and that the contagion of violence would spread. Such has been the case; and now, in other places, individuals have risen up, only too ready to take the law [23] into their own hands, and rejoicing in an opportunity of threatening indiscriminate severities. If it was right in Mr. Darby to publish a circular announcing a prospective excommunication on the comprehensive plan we have just had before us; if he was performing his duty in erecting a private tribunal, independent of the counsels and wishes of the Brethren; then, by a very easy inference, it would seem right to others to imitate him; and thus the Brethren, whose testimony has been for the unity of the Church, are likely to exhibit the spectacle of a number of independent tribunals, pronouncing judgment, and executing sentences of excision on their neighbours; cutting one another to pieces, and committing general havoc, till the destruction is complete. This system has been introduced in Yorkshire, by the publication of another circular, a caricature copy of that which Mr. Darby issued; and we have only to wait a little to see other copies, for the lure thus held out to arbitrary propensities is too tempting not to be caught at,

“And every pelting, petty officer,
Will use his heav’n for thunder, nothing but thunder.”

We approach now the last scene which has been enlivened by the appearance of another champion, who, eagerly enlisting himself on the accuser’s side, has assailed with unusual spleen the Christians at Bristol that have offended him by toleration, the least pardonable offence in the eyes of a dogmatic divine. The attacks of this gentleman (Mr. Wigram) have been mainly directed against Mr. Craik, the respected coadjutor of Mr. Müller, names well known, and universally respected, wherever they have been known. Mr. Wigram has published two pamphlets in this quarrel, “An Appeal to Saints that remain still in Bethesda and Salem, as to certain bad Doctrine,” and “An Answer to Mr. H.

Craik's Letter;" and in such a style has he written them, that he has left far behind, even in these stormy regions, all competitors in the art of controversial scolding. To those who feel disposed to examine the doctrinal questions of this debate, and who desire to see what may be said on the other side of the question, we refer to an anonymous publication, **Shibboleth*," which has with skill and energy detected some of Mr. Wigram's sophisms, and pointed out the most prominent failures and offences of his publications.

Mr. Wigram begins his attack against Mr. Craik, thus: – "I challenge his statements as blasphemous and heretical." And then we have such flowers as the following, "Of the heart and its affections, of the mind and all its creditable thoughts of Henry Craik, I still desire to hope better things." "I would rather see him indignantly burn off the hand which wrote those words, in flames kindled by the pages on which it is printed, than lazily and carelessly allow the flock to be corrupted, and the name and honour of the Lord spoken against." "God having allowed Mr. B. Newton to be proved a heretic and a blasphemer of Christ, and subverter of the faith. G. Müller and H. Craik would have Bethesda count him a Brother, and try to stand neutral. Now when God and Satan are the par- [24] ties, as in this case, between whom a man seeks to be neutral, it is not hard to say on which side such will appear." "Bethesda has trampled under foot the mercy of God in restoring his people," – "the self-sufficiency and superciliousness, the impeccability and infallibility assumed by George Müller were really alarming," – "from that hour I felt the immoral system of Newtonianism had Bethesda as its hold," – "I see nothing like a humbled spirit in Mr. Craik's letter," – "He will judge every body and everything save himself."

How can a writer so intemperate hope to obtain any listeners out of his own party? who would not justly be offended by such unmannerly railings? but Mr. Wigram appears insensible to those feelings which are usually excited in generous bosoms by the exhibition of brow-beating and menace, and seems to think that he may abundantly make up for the softness of his arguments by the hardness of his words.

As for his proofs of heresy adduced from Mr. Craik's printed works, nothing can be less successful. With all possible anxiety to extract matter of accusation; and after calling into his aid suspicions grounded on everything Mr. Craik has †*omitted* to say – by giving the worst turns to the most innocent expressions – by ransacking for hidden blasphemies in rhetorical illustrations and similes – by torturing guiltless metaphors – and by examining little words with a powerful microscope, in order to discover monsters, which the naked eye of candour cannot detect – by all these unscrupulous means, Mr. Wigram has discovered nothing worth a moment's consideration. All his efforts have terminated in finding that which is popularly called a "mare's nest," – nothing but his own entire defeat has been the result.

In one part of his accusations he has, moreover, covered himself with ridicule; for after raising a prodigious clamour about applying the words of the prophet, "He was a root out of a dry ground," to a believer's estimate of Christ, – lo! it has been discovered

* *Shibboleth*, or the New Test of Communion amongst certain Brethren. London. Houlston and Stoneman, price 3d. See also "The Point at Issue, or Observations, by R. C. Johnson." Plymouth.

The author of *Shibboleth* seems to be a friend of Mr. Newton, but logic is logic, whoever is the author; in other respects that tract is not without its faults.

† *e. g.* "Mr. Newton has charged loathsome disease and bodily sickness, and the proper experiences of an unconverted elect soul (*i. e.* I suppose the expectations of damnation), – awful blasphemy! – upon Christ: Mr. Henry Craik's words MAY mean, and *naturally suggest* a great deal that is similar."

Mr. Wigram's "natural suggestions" must surely mean the suggestions of his nature.

that Mr. Darby* himself has made the very same application of these words! giving them that turn, which, in spite of all Mr. Wigram's horrors, may be very innocently given, and without the slightest suspicion of heretical pravity.

Mr. Wigram had in his first pamphlet charged Mr. Craik with uttering, by word of mouth, irreverent expressions, and such as were calculated to wound the feelings of all Christians. This was reported amongst some in Bristol, gladly laid hold of by Mr. Wigram, and by him published as an undoubted fact. On this Mr. Craik remarks, "Mr. Wigram wrote his tract while living in the neighbourhood of my house; [25] *i. e.* half an hour's walk from Kingsdown, yet he never availed himself of the opportunity of personally enquiring as to the fact of certain expressions having been employed by me, or of the connexion in which they were used, or of the meaning intended to be conveyed by them – I ask any godly Christian, is such conduct according to the law of Christ? is it right to print and publish reports relative to a Brother without inquiry?"

To this Mr. Wigram has the courage to offer the following justification. "To this I answer, with sadness of heart, I knew, and *had proof unquestionable to my own mind*, that Mr. Craik was under a delusion, and identified himself with a system that makes every one in it reckless as to the truth. Take Robert Chapman, a truthful man as need be; what sense or spiritual wisdom would there have been, after telling him, at Bristol, you are *deluded, Satan brought you to dishonour to God*, and mislead his sheep, just as you did at Plymouth – in my asking him for an explanation.

"*Having settled* that Mr. Craik was under the Newtonian delusion, it would not have been common sense in me to go to him, neither would it have been common honesty to have asked for evidence *when my judgment was formed*; nor common grace, believing he was in a position in which he was tempted to the sin of evasion and deception if asked, to have asked him any questions."

Where shall we find the like of this; where shall we elsewhere be able to see such a specimen of superstition warping the judgment and the moral feelings?

A Christian living close in the neighbourhood of another Christian, one with whom he has been for a long time familiarly acquainted, hears it reported that his neighbour Christian has made use of certain expressions likely to shock the feelings of the pious. These reports he accepts with eagerness, but does not call upon his brother, friend, and neighbour, to lay the case before him, and to ascertain if these reports are accurate, but forthwith himself prints and publishes the reports, aggravated with sharp and unkind remarks. When asked why he so violated the laws of propriety, friendship, and Christian brotherhood, why he pursued a course which, *mutatis mutandis*, even the world would look upon with aversion, he answers, that he knew, by infallible signs and "proofs unquestionable to his own mind," that his neighbour, friend, and brother, had a devil that had got possession of his conscience; so that, if he had indeed inquired of his Christian brother the truth of these reports, he should only have received a deceitful answer, for he was certain that he must "be tempted to the sin of evasion and deception."

* Mr. Darby's words are, "He (Jesus) was in more ordinary circumstances than any prophet. As to his form and appearance – his visage more marred, than any man's, and his form than the sons of men – a root out of a dry ground – JESUS WAS ALL THIS." – *Words of Truth*, iii. 335.

Thus Mr. Darby is now, by Mr. Wigram's own showing, as dark a blasphemer and heretic as Mr. Craik! – See *Shibboleth*, p. 4.

It may be added, that Vitringa and Gill, two Hebrew scholars of celebrity, take the view which Mr. Wigram says, any scholar in a Sunday-school would immediately know to be wrong.

And all this Mr. Wigram states with gravity, interspersed with theological phrases; and he calmly tells us, that, “having so settled” the case in his own mind, it would not have been either “common honesty,” or “common grace,” to pursue a line of conduct which every honest man, and every ordinary Christian, would feel to be indispensable. Thus, then, if I am fully persuaded in my own mind, by “proofs” to myself “unquestionable,” that my friend and neighbour is under the delusion of a devil, I am emancipated from the laws of charity, courtesy, and kindness towards him, and I may myself do that which is unjust, unkind, and inequitable. To this has it come at last; let it be registered, and not forgotten!

With one more specimen of this writer’s style and thoughts we conclude:

[26] “To Brethren generally, I shall say a word as to *the why* we have been allowed to have this last and most overwhelming wave of sorrow, viz., Bethesda’s failure. The Lord has been dishonoured, *and his Spirit grieved* by the hateful comparison many of you have made of ‘the evil at Plymouth,’ and ‘details connected with the mode in which it was attacked,’ and through mercy arrested. The Lord gave deliverance in Samson’s day from the Philistines – there was much in Samson reprehensible; and so in the several deliverances, it was the case with each of the judges. But this was the Lord’s testimony against the low estate of the people, and had any of them seen that which was reprehensible in the deliverer, and instead of mourning for Israel’s low estate, only blamed the deliverer, or compared the evil of the deliverer with the evil of the oppressor, he would have been really despising God, and refusing to bear his own shame.” – *Appeal to Saints*, p. 16.

We can afford to dismiss, without comment, the absurdity that represents Mr. Newton as the Philistines, and Mr. Darby as Samson, and which assumes that the troubles relating to Bethesda are a judgment on the Brethren for their disapprobation of the mode in which Mr. Darby conducted the controversy at Plymouth – but a protest is needed against that line of argument by which it is attempted to consecrate an occasional disregard of the moral law. A Saint in Israel would have done well to reprove Samson for that which was reprehensible in his conduct, for sin is always sin whoever commits it; and Mr. Wigram is mistaken if he supposes that because a Christian is engaged in that which seems to him to be the cause of God, he is thereby emancipated from any precept that bears on the conduct of Christians. Whoever may have done that which is wrong in opposing evil, has committed an offence, – and the example of all the Judges of Israel cannot palliate that offence. “The Spirit of God” is grieved where sin is extenuated. All unrighteousness is sin. The ends do not justify the means. This is the morality of the New Testament.

THE END.

[27]

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[2]

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APPENDIX A.

THE ERRONEOUS OPINIONS ACKNOWLEDGED AND RETRACTED AT PLYMOUTH.

No. I.

A statement and acknowledgment respecting certain doctrinal errors, by B. W. Newton.

This is a publication of 7 pages, but there is added to it a sort of appendix, signed S. Prideaux Tregelles.

The date is November 26, 1847.

Mr. Newton refers to a paper of the *Christian Witness*, vol. ii, 'on the doctrines of the Church in Newman-street,' as containing, some at least of the erroneous sentiments, which he here retracts. That paper has, indeed, since his reference to it, been the ground work of many of the accusations brought against Mr. Newton by Mr. Darby, and his other opponents; but it is remarkable that that paper, printed in the year 1835, had for twelve years been in the hands of the Brethren, and had been reprinted both as a tract, and in a second edition of the *Christian Witness*, without exciting any uneasiness. In the second edition of the *Christian Witness* of the year 1838, it again appears; and, in short, it was an accredited publication of the Brethren. If it is now found to be an heretical paper; but the want of sagacity in the Brethren in letting it pass, and circulating it freely for so long a period, is remarkable.

Mr. Newton in his statement and acknowledgment, thus expresses himself. Page 5: –

“My error resulted in my holding that the Lord Jesus, while perfectly free from all, even the slightest taint of sin, either original or actual, yet was under Adam as a federal head, and then was exposed by his position to the imputation of Adam’s guilt, as is taught respecting mankind in the 5th of Romans. I saw it to be distinctly revealed that the Lord was subject to hunger, thirst, weariness, sorrow, &c., which things we know are consequences of the fall; and I erred in attributing his participation in their afflictions to a *federal* relationship to Adam.

“Recent circumstances having necessitated a careful review of the whole subject, I have been led to see that I was distinctly in error in holding that the Lord Jesus came by birth under any imputation of guilt or the consequences of such imputation. I see that results altogether contrary to Christian Doctrine are involved in, and may be fairly deduced from this error, which I now desire explicitly to renounce; and I hereby withdraw all statements of mine, whether in print or in any other form, in which *this error or any of its fruits* may be found. (Mr. Newton’s Italics.)

[4] “The doctrine in question was, I believe, first stated by me in a part of the tract above referred to against Irvingism, entitled, ‘Doctrines in the Church in Newman-street considered,’ published in 1835, which tract was inserted in a second edition of the *Christian Witness*, in 1837 or 1838.

“I request that this may be considered as a withdrawal of the erroneous parts of the above-mentioned paper, and I also desire that any statements of mine, whether in notes of Lectures taken by others, or in any communications of my own, in which this doctrine

occurs, may now be considered withdrawn – that they may not be regarded as now containing my sentiments, and that they may no longer be circulated.”

This is the substance of Mr. Newton’s retraction; it is well known that he is accused of still clinging to an erroneous opinion that though our Lord was not in federal relationship to Adam, and that sin was not therefore imputed to him on that head, he still was involved, in some sense or other, in the curse resting on Israel, owing to his being born a Jew in Israel. This point will subsequently he [= be] elucidated by quotations, in order that the candid reader may judge for himself, in the meanwhile the other retractions first demand attention.

No. II.

A confession of error by Henry W. Soltau, dated Dec. 22, 1847. Page 7.

“The errors are twofold –

“First, – I have held that the blessed Lord Jesus was so closely by birth identified with the fallen family of man, as to come under the imputation of Adam’s guilt, which rested on them; and in consequence was treated by God as one of the rebel family, suffering therefore under his hand many of the penalties which attached to that family, but that in these circumstances he stood pure and sinless, and proved himself before God, in his thoughts and ways, the righteous one, though dwelling in the midst of sinners ...

The second error which I have to confess, is one I believe more subtle than the first, and which I fear has produced more baneful effects on others. It is this. That the Lord was by birth so connected with the nation Israel, as to be made to feel from the hands of God, their ruined and awful condition in his sight, as under the curse of the broken law. That the living experiences therefore of the Lord, were frequently those of distance from God – of terror pressed upon his soul by God – of wrath and curse. That he had, however, seasons of relief, and comfort, and brightness, partly owing to his own perfect obedience and faith, and prayer, and partly through the direct interference of God.”

No. III.

A confession and retraction of two doctrinal errors, by George J. Walker. Page 7. January 7, 1848.

... “1. I had considered that the sentence of death, Rom. v, pronounced upon all men because guilty in Adam, affected our Lord as well as others. I thought that he was in fact obnoxious to that sentence like any other person, but that owing to his perfect and faultless obedience, its operation in his case became neutralised or suspended, and did not interfere to hinder the perfect voluntariness and value of his atoning sacrifice ...

[5] “2. That our Lord, by birth as an Israelite, became liable to certain sinless penalties, and effects of the curse of the broken law; some of which penalties, &c., did, and others did not actually come upon him, inasmuch as other considerations, as his own perfect obedience and his personal relationship to the Father intervened ... That he was, in short, in many respects treated by God, as sharing the condition of the nation, into which condition he entered by *birth*, and involved in their circumstances as under wrath, and at a distance from God.”

No. IV.

A Letter to the Saints in Ebrington-street, Plymouth. By J. E. Batten, Tothill, Dec. 23, 1847. pp. 12.

... “It is too well understood by all now, to admit of my being mistaken, when I say that there has been a system of doctrine held and taught among us respecting the person, relations, feelings, experiences, and utterances of Christ, which has been widely circulated by printed tracts, and as publicly censured and condemned ... These doctrines may be stated as comprising –

“1. That the Lord Jesus at his birth, and because born of a woman, partook of certain consequences of the fall, – *mortality* being one, and because of this association by nature, he became an heir of death – born under wrath, as a penalty.

“2. That the Lord Jesus at his birth stood in such relation to Adam as a federal head – that guilt was imputed to him – and that he was exposed to certain consequences of such imputation, as stated in Rom. v.

“3. That the Lord Jesus was also born as a Jew under the broken law, and was regarded by God as standing in that relation to him, and that God pressed upon his soul the terrors of Sinai, as due to one in that relation[.]

“4. That the Lord Jesus took the place of distance from God, which such a person, so born and so related, must take; and that he had to find his way back to God, by some path in which God might at last own him and meet him.

“5. That so fearful was the distance, and so real were these relationships by birth – and so actual were their attendant penalties of death, wrath, and the curse – that until his deliverance, God is said to have rebuked him – to have chastened him – and that in anger and hot displeasure.

“6. That because of these dealings from God, and Christ’s sufferings under them, the language of Lamentations iii, and Psalms vi, xxxvii, and lxxxviii, &c., has been stated to be the utterance of the Lord Jesus, while under the heavy pressure from God’s hand.

“7. That the Lord Jesus extricated himself from those inflictions by keeping the law; and that at John’s baptism the consequent difference in Christ’s feelings and experiences was as great as to have been illustrated by a comparison of the difference between Mount Sinai and Mount Zion – or between law and grace.

“8. That besides all these relations which Christ took by birth, and their attendant penalties and inflictions, and his sufferings under the heavy hand of God – it has been further stated that he had the experience of an unconverted though elect Jew.”

All these doctrines Mr. Batten renounces in the strongest and most impassioned language.

[6]

No. V.

A confession of doctrinal and practical errors, by W. B. Dyer, Dec. 31, 1847. Page 16.

The diffuse style of this publication makes it difficult to extract the most important points.

... “The first thing I desire to confess is, that for some years I have been holding, as the truth of God, that the Lord Jesus was born under the sentence of death, and I drew this from Romans v, 12. From this verse I have been accustomed to conclude, that our blessed Lord, as man, was born under the imputation of Adam’s one offence; that thus he was born subject to death, and also that he delivered himself from this liability to death by perfectly keeping the law. This last thought, concerning the way in which he delivered

himself from the inherited penalty of death, was not of course drawn from Rom. v. It arose from the fact of Christ's being under the law, and from the promise of life to any which kept the law, which, as all know, Christ did ... As soon as my eyes were opened to see the untruthfulness of what I had so long held respecting the Lord's relation to Adam, I instantly suspected that much which had been much more recently taught respecting his relation to Israel was equally unsound, and with these more recent teachings, I felt I was very seriously involved ... I will say, therefore, that one main error respecting the Jewish relationships of the Lord Jesus, put forth in those tracts, is, that by birth he shared in that nation's exposure to the broken covenant of Sinai."

The rest of the pamphlet is occupied with confutation of these errors, interspersed with many expressions of penitence for having aided in their dissemination.

The above retractions are the authentic evidence to study on the sub[j]ect. It is to be observed that they all, in different ways, agree in the main point. Mr. Newton, however, does not go so far as his associates: he says nothing of the *Jewish* aspect of this delicate question, a point on which the others enlarge a good deal. Mr. Dyer, and one or two of the others, pointedly refer to Mr. Newton's tracts (though without naming them) as containing some of the statements which they are most anxious to renounce, and particularly those that refer to Christ's relations to Israel.

Some extracts are here appended from Mr. Newton's "Remarks on the Sufferings of the Lord Jesus," – a letter addressed to certain Brethren and Sisters in Christ. By B. W. Newton, July 26, 1847. pp. 49.

"The period of his baptism may be considered the great turning point in the life of the Lord Jesus; of course, I mean His life of service here. As regarded the dispensational history, both of Israel and of man, it was a period of infinite moment, for it was the introduction into the earth of the new economy of grace. John could say, 'The kingdom of Heaven hath drawn nigh,' and Jesus could say, 'The kingdom of God hath come upon you.' John could say, 'Behold the Lamb of God,' and Jesus could say, 'He that believeth in me hath everlasting life.' If then the soul of Jesus had realised, experimentally realised, and that too under the hand of God, and to a degree that we little think, the fearful condition of Israel; if he [7] had seen it, as it were girt about by fiery indignation, and threatened by the full devouring power of that mountain of fire and blackness and tempest, under which they had been abiding, how joyful to his soul the sense of the introduction of new things, new and everlasting blessings – I say everlasting, for however much some may have rejected, this makes no alteration in the blessings themselves, nor in their effects on those who *did* receive them and live. His soul, therefore, could not but have appreciated and rejoiced in the great dispensational change!

"If we consider Himself personally, indeed there was no change. He could not become more holy, or more devoted, or more obedient than he already was, for he had early said, 'Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business.' His relationship to God as the beloved Son; his spotlessness as the lamb could not alter, but if we regard his dispensational relations, in *them*, how great the change (at the period of his baptism). The difference between Sinai, the mountain of blackness, and Zion, the mountain of light, and grace, and blessing, the place of the Church of the first born might be used to illustrate the difference between the two *dispensational* positions held by the Lord Jesus, in the midst of Israel, previous to his baptism, and that which he dispensationally and ministerially took when anointed by the Holy Ghost. The anointing of Jesus was as the coming back again of the light of promise and grace: the light of the day of Abraham into the midst of

the deep night of Sinai, darkness that had so long brooded over Israel. The spring, the fountain of this light, had indeed been placed in the midst of Israel as soon as Jesus was there, as soon as he was the babe seen in the manger, but it had not dispensationally arisen. John's testimony was needful first, Jesus followed, and then it could be said, 'the people which sat in darkness have seen a great light, and to them that sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up.' And as if in token of this great change in his dispensational *relations*, (for I anxiously repeat, that there was no change in him personally,) Heaven which had not before been opened over him, was opened over his head, and the Holy Ghost descended, and abode upon him. He stood in a new position, and words were put in his lips. He could not before have said, 'the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.' From his birth he had been the Lamb, the spotless Lamb proclaimed to die; but he would not until now have been *formally testified* of as the Lamb, nor have preached of himself as the Rock. He could now call sinners to himself, and forgive their sins and give them life. It was salvation by faith through grace.

"If we contrast the words that conclude the 119th Psalm,* 'I have wandered like a lamb that is perishing, seek thy servant for I do not forget thy commandments,' with the words of the Lord Jesus, when he first arose in the synagogue of Galilee and said, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,' or with those which he last spake to his disciples in John, I think it may give us some conception of the difference between the years of his earlier, and those of his later and public services. In his earlier years, as I believe, from his twelfth year upwards, he was trained and exercised chiefly in the school of sorrow, in order that *he might* be the anointed servant. At Jordan [8] he appears as the servant afore-prepared, but now owned, anointed, and sent forth by God. The sufferings, therefore, whether of body or of spirit, that were intended to exercise and try Him in His private and individual path, were the new and fresh sufferings which pertained to the minister of God, and to a minister rejected, followed. If he was made to realize the distance into which man had wandered out of the presence of God, and if He realized also the distance of Israel; if ever the experience of Job as man in weakness before God; or of Jeremiah as the depository of Israel's woe, was pressed upon the heart of the Lord Jesus by God – I believe it to have been chiefly, if not exclusively, before his baptism. Observe – I am speaking *of the exercises of his heart from God*. That his own soul, indeed, did not cease to enter into the condition of things around Him, and that the poignancy of his sorrow increased rather than lessened in proportion to the blind wilfulness of Israel in rejecting Him, became more and more developed, I most assuredly believe, but I am not now speaking of the spontaneous actings of his soul, but of the manner in which He was directly exercised by God. I speak, I trust, humbly, and under the correction of other's judgments, but I repeat, that it appears to me that God did not exercise Him, after he had become His public and recognised servant, in the same way that He exercised Him in His private individual path before. Each was, indeed, a path of sorrow; sorrow, in either case, brought on Him, through and because of others; each had its own peculiar bitterness, although the nature of that bitterness, and the causes by which it was originated, might differ."

This extract is sufficient, we judge, to make the reader acquainted with Mr. Newton's system, if we may so call it; and it is better to leave it without analysis, or attempting to

* Mr. Newton prefers this translation, which he defends, adducing also the criticism of Dathe on the verse in question.

state the meaning in distinct propositions. Let every one come to their own conclusions, and, if possible, without prejudice, or *a desire* either to approve or condemn.

It will be observed that the date of the above extract is July 26, 1847. The same year, but in the month of September, Mr. Newton published another pamphlet of 77 pages, entitled "Observations on a Tract, entitled the Sufferings of Christ, as set forth in a Lecture on Psalm vi., considered." This pamphlet is an answer to one published by Mr. Harris, who had written some severe strictures on a sermon on the 6th Psalm, as already explained in the retrospect.

Extracts are subjoined, "We should form a very inadequate conception of the living experience of the Lord Jesus, if in addition to the sufferings which followed spontaneously, as it were, from the condition of man and of Israel, we did not also recognise a yet more close and searching dealing of God with his servant, whereby his sensitive and perfect soul was made to feel in a manner inconceivable to us the reality of the circumstances around him. It belonged to the place which the Lord Jesus had taken as man to be instructed by God (Is. ii., 4.), and to be dealt with by God. "He learned obedience by the things which he suffered." It belonged to his sensitive and holy soul to feel, and it pleased God to appoint that it should feel, feel to a degree inconceivable by us, under exercise of spirit from him. How should we feel, imperfect as our sensibilities are, if God, according to the power of his own holiness, were to press upon the apprehension of our souls a truthful sense of the present and future condition of ruined man? and what relations were there, either of Israel or of man, that [9] Jesus was not caused to estimate thus? "Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law. My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments. Trouble and anguish have taken hold of me, yet thy commandments are my delight. I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up, while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted." It is the thought of Jesus being caused by God to estimate the terror of His holiness in relation to the circumstances of humanity, pressed in vivid realization on his soul, that alone enables me to understand such words as these ... The servants of God, such, for example, as St. Paul, may follow their master in drinking, in their more feeble measure, of the cup of other's woe; they may suffer much with others and for the sake of others, they may also have exercises of spirit, but no one, excepting Jesus, ever had his soul exercised in this manner (for the dispensation was one of law), nor with the same intensity – the intensity of truth. The Lord Jesus was as much alone in his living estimate under God's hand of the circumstances of human life here, as in enduring wrath upon the cross. He who before he was made flesh had known all the heights of uncreated and eternal glory, was also, when here, made to estimate, according to the sensibilities of that nature which he had taken, the (to us) inconceivable distance of humanity from God; and when thus exercised, though personally holy and beloved, He was made to feel that his association with those thus standing in the fearfulness of their distance from God, was a real thing, and that it was so regarded by God. His was no mere pretended imaginary association." (35.)

Mr. Newton's last publication on these questions is entitled, "A letter on subjects connected with the Lord's humanity." It appeared in 1848. It is a tract of 51 pages with an appendix.

Extract. "I repeat, that the Lord Jesus never knew, and never could know, moral distance, or distance of affection from God, his Father; yet, in another sense, his condition as born out of Paradise, and as an Israelite, and as having a body and soul similar to those around him, sin only excepted, was a condition very distant from the rest in which man had first been, and yet more distant from the strength and majesty and glory which, as man, He now has on the throne of heaven. It was his patient, and perfect, and willing

continuance in these circumstances that proved his moral nearness to God, and *the circumstances themselves afforded channels through which sufferings appointed of God reached him*. Out of the condition of his weak humanity, and also out of the circumstances of man, – and of Israel, with which he associated himself, flowed his sufferings. The condition of his humanity and the external circumstances of men and of Israel, formed the channels through which God was pleased to exercise his holy and blessed Son. They were so many well-springs of experience, and I regard the Psalms, so far as they belong to the Lord, as the embodiment and expression of their experiences.” (13.)

This last sentence is a clue to much of Mr. Newton’s reasoning. Some of the Psalms of a deeply mournful character he understands as the language of the Redeemer – the explanation of these lamentations we see in the above extracts; and, indeed, in no other way could one account for Mr. Newton’s plan of our Lord’s trials and sorrows *before his baptism*, of which the history of the New Testament gives no information. It is an ideal plan, based on an interpretation of the Psalms, which sound criticism has [10] not yet established. If he has other motives of a more dangerous tendency, and if his designs are subtle and destructive, the reader has now materials before him to detect the evil.

The following passage from the Letter is to be studied.

“Did not Christ walk on the sea ... Did not his countenance shine as the sun, and his garments become white as the light? and was not the non-exercise of this power the perpetual evidence that he voluntarily procured the title of his personal relation – *and voluntarily kept himself* in the relative position?”

“He forewent the title of his personal position the moment he took flesh. He then assumed a relative position, and resolved to abide therein, according to the Father’s will, and to submit himself to the laws of God’s government in this fallen earth; and every weakness or pang that he found in the humanity he had assumed, was an evidence not only that he had foregone, but also that he was still foregoing, the title of his personal position, and that he was choosing to continue in this relative one. He declined the relief and rescue which he might have had if he had sought that which was due to his personal position, and preferred to continue in the association on which he had entered, when he received humanity.” (Letter, p. 25.)

Mr. Darby has selected this passage as peculiarly dangerous, and says, “Here we have the point.” (Remarks, p. 15.)

Mr. Newton also says –

“As regards the channels of Christ’s living sufferings, they were derived from the circumstances in which he had been pleased to place himself when he assumed flesh. He had become by incarnation both a man and an Israelite – and many a sorrow had become connected with both. Man, even as to the constitution of his body, suffered. He was out of Eden, and found many an appointment of God’s natural government against man, thus righteously being taught that he had fallen, and that creation groaned. Israel also had a peculiar cup of sorrow. These were the channels through which the sufferings appointed of God reached him. Under many of the sorrows he actually suffered, and circumstances which he, as the sinless one, could never personally know, he could nevertheless *estimate*. His soul could appreciate them, and the appreciation was bitter.” (Letter, p. 48.)

One incidental sentence in Mr. Newton’s observations should not be omitted. “I had long and painfully felt that the extent of his sufferings was not acknowledged; that many who have some appreciation of his vicarious sufferings on the cross, have little considered, and little desire to consider, his living sufferings, which were no less true, no less real. The dried ears of corn dried by the fire, even corn beaten out of full ears, is a type of the Lord Jesus as a living sufferer, quite as much as the sin-offering burned without the

camp is a type of his more terrible suffering under wrath in death. We have to know him in life, and we have to know him in death. We cannot part with the knowledge of one of his revealed relations without suffering loss to our souls.”

We may conclude these long extracts by a sort of epitome which Mr. Newton himself gives of the meaning of his tracts on those disputed points, “The tracts state, that the Lord Jesus ‘*evidenced*’ his title to life, by his keeping the law – ‘and they teach that this was necessary *by the appoint- [11] ment of God* – not essentially necessary. They ‘state also, that the relative position of suffering, which he held, was one out of which ‘*He was ABLE*’ to extricate, and from which he ‘proved’ that he could extricate himself [sic] by his own perfect obedience.” (Letter, p. 27.)

The italics and capital letters are Mr. Newton’s.

APPENDIX B.

The Controversy in Yorkshire.

THE controversy was introduced into Yorkshire by the publication of a document in October, 1848, bearing the whimsical signatures –

Leeds. J. W.
Otley. W. T.

It first appeared as a lithographed letter, but was afterwards republished as a printed tract.

The object of the writers was clearly to imitate Mr. Darby; they, in some passages, copy the words of his circular, published about six weeks or two months earlier, and echo his sentiments, even to exaggeration, about “Satan,” who is with them also the *cheval de bataille*.

The absurdity of their pretensions, and their errors in reasoning, have been pointed out in some provincial answers, in which the matter has been warmly discussed. An answer by Mr. Jukes, of Hull, merits attention.

In addition, however, to the observations elicited by this document, we may remark, that the authors of the circular have launched into a subject which they do not understand. The real point of Mr. Newton’s controverted opinions has entirely escaped them, and they have turned their attacks to imaginary objects, created by their own ignorance, but of which they exhibit, nevertheless, an amusing fear.

The proof of this is easy.

They thus express themselves. “In 1847 the evil was permitted to show itself in the avowal by Mr. N., and others, of Ebrington Street, of the awful doctrine, that our blessed Lord was a man and an Israelite [sic], *not vicariously, not as a substitute*, obnoxious to the wrath of God. In one of his tracts, Mr. N. [sic] applies to the blessed Lord the following comparison, ‘If I was to send a faithful servant, heavily burthened, to scale the sides of an icy mountain, and were to see his foot slide, should I marvel?’ Think of Christ’s foot sliding under any circumstances.”

This is all a mistake: the passage to which they refer, is Mr. Newton’s “Remarks,” in a note to page 16. Mr. N. is there proposing a new translation of a verse of the 119th, [sic] Psalm. “I have substituted,” says he, “revive for restore, because the ambiguity of the

latter word has made many attach to it the sense of restoration from sin or from backsliding ... but when the verse is rendered, I have wandered like a lamb that is perishing ... the difficulty is removed; for we instantly see that such wandering is no sinful wandering, it is the wandering of the pilgrim and the stranger. The same may be said respecting many other verses in this and other Psalms, which, in the way in which they are at [12] present translated, seem to imply moral imperfectness, when the words, rightly explained, mean none.

“What infinitely different thoughts may be suggested by the same word differently applied? If I were to send a faithful servant heavily burthened to scale the side of a icy mountain, and were to see his foot slide, should I marvel? but what if I should see him stumble or slip in some easy path, because of carelessness, or because he had drunk of some forbidden cup, how different my judgment of his condition.”

Thus do these writers make scarecrows of their own inerudition, and, losing themselves in a philological disquisition, think to solve the difficulty by raising an outcry against heresy.

To refute their error about ‘vicariousness’ would be a waste of time; the Appendix affords the confutation at once. In one word, they did not understand the subject; and were ill qualified to write about it. The document is in every way undeserving of notice, but very trivial instruments may in certain circumstances do much mischief.

APPENDIX C.

Mr. Darby.

From the October number of the Quarterly Journal of Prophecy, published by Nisbet, we make the following extract:

“An examination of the statements made in the thoughts on the Apocalypse, by B. W. Newton, and an inquiry how far they accord with Scripture, By J. N. Darby: London.

“In some things Mr. Darby is successful in his ‘examinations,’ but in several places we profess ourselves unable to follow him. He and Mr. Newton have got hold of some new and intricate points, in reference to which, it is not always easy to apprehend their reasonings, which are very subtle, and far from scriptural simplicity. As a controversial work, Mr. Darby’s is much too harsh and uncourteous for our taste. It has more of the rugged, and less of the gentle, than almost any prophetic volume that we have read. Were we to regard it as indicating the tone of feeling in that body to which he belongs, we should say that the meekness and gentleness of Christ are sorely wanting. We should not wish to be guilty of addressing a brother in the Lord as Mr. Darby addresses Mr. Newton. Surely language like the following is unseemly in a saint. ‘It is very convenient to say this, but can any reasonable man be expected to receive things in this way?’ Again. ‘This rests merely upon a decidedly bad and false translation of Greek.’ Again. ‘This is a complete mis-statement of the text.’ Again. ‘A system as regardless of geographical facts, as we have found it to be of scripture statements, and grammar itself. I never met with a book like this in its assertions.’

“These are not a tithe of the unkind expressions scattered throughout the volume. Surely these things ought not to be. It is sad, indeed, that a controversy upon Apocalyptic interpretation, between two Christian men, should call forth such unbrotherliness of language and tone. May we ourselves be kept from this.”

Alas! if these good men are thus offended with the flowers they have [13] culled from the pages of this polemical writer, what would they say of the nettles and thistles which a more experienced hand could collect, and particularly from his recent answers to Mr. Newton's publications."

As a specimen of Mr. Darby's style of conducting controversy, the following passage may be here given. "Mr. N. goes beyond scripture in saying (p. 35) that 'to say there was in his humanity a divine spring of thought and feeling, is to deny his real humanity.' Was his humanity then without a divine spring of thought and feeling? Had he said, it was not *of* or *from* his humanity, I should have nothing to say; but to say there was none in it, unsettles the doctrine of Christ's person. There was the fulness of the Godhead *bodily*, and the divine nature was a spring of many thoughts and feelings to him. This is not the whole truth, but to deny it is not the truth. If it merely mean, that humanity has not in itself a divine spring, this is plain enough; it would not be humanity. I am equally aware that it will be said it was his person; but to separate wholly the humanity and divinity in springs of thought and feeling, is dangerously overstepping the scripture. Is it meant that the love and holiness of the divine nature did not produce, was not a spring of thought and feeling in his human soul? This would be to lower Christ below a Christian. *Perhaps this is what Mr. N. means* in saying he was dispensationally lower than the Church. *If so, it is merely a round-about road to Socinianism.*" – (Darby's Remarks, p. 17.)

Having at last settled the point that Mr. Newton has an eye to introduce Socinian views, it may be instructive to refer to the original passage from which this "round-about" deduction is made.

"To say, that the Lord, not only in respect of his being sinless, but that also in other respects had a humanity *sui generis*, *i. e.* a humanity of a solitary and peculiar kind, is a denial of his true humanity. His *Person* was *sui generis* – solitary and peculiar, for he was God and Man in one Person – the new Thing in the Earth, but his *humanity* (sinless though it was), was not *sui generis*. With the exception of sin being absent, He was in body and in soul like unto us. And to say that there was in his humanity a divine spring of thought and feeling, is to deny his real humanity. In his *person* there was a divine spring of thought and feeling, but not in his humanity. His humanity was the seat of human sensibilities and feelings," &c. – Newton's Letter, p. 35.

This is certainly a curious passage from which to extract Socinian material; but what might we not extract by a process of reasoning similar to that adopted by Mr. Darby, for by making suggestions of all possible meanings for one's opponent, and then at last pouncing upon the worst that can be thought of by a PERHAPS, any imaginable accusation may be fixed upon the character of him we wished to ruin. In a previous controversy, Mr. Darby discovered that Mr. Newton held *Buddhist* sentiments; it is no wonder, therefore, now to find this same ingenious disputant saddling his opponent with Socinianism, nor would it much surprise us to hear him declare that he is a Mahometan and a Jew.

Mr. Darby has been led in the progress of this dispute into statements, which, if he were to encounter an antagonist like himself, might be very plausibly used to prove that he too is a heretic. There can be little doubt that in opposing Mr. Newton, he has so expressed himself as to open the way to great mistakes; neither could it much surprise us, to find that Mr. [14] Darby's avowed disciples at first indirectly, and then with less hesitation, impugning the humanity of Christ. Let the Brethren beware – the danger is not imaginary, for so slight is the difference between some of the statements lately broached, and that class of doctrine which altogether separates the Redeemer from man's nature, that some might find themselves, by indiscreetly opposing that which they do not understand, slipping unawares into a region of perilous error.

They have learned, that Mr. Newton's statements of our Lord's association with man and Israel in their fallen state, is a heresy, and to say that our Lord's humanity was, in fact, the same as ours, is sinful; the next step is not difficult to conjecture – several consequences are at the door, several corollaries waiting for admission.

And indeed the danger is not imaginary; for it is said, that recently at Bristol, in the party which has seceded from Bethesda, preachers have arisen who are teaching that the Redeemer had an impassible body, and that his sufferings therefore were not the sufferings of our flesh. Thus have we Marcion, Apelles, and Valentinus on the stage once more; and Gnosticism, after a repose of ages, is waking up again to alarm and trouble the orthodox.

Let the reader now consider the following passage: –

“He (Christ) must really enter into the circumstances of man's condition, into the misery and desolation in which man is, as wandering, yet departed from God. He could not take the place of Adam in the midst of all that which would have sustained his soul: it is the *place rather of Cain; the place of estrangement from God, in the absence of all sustaining power from without.* There was in Himself the power of sustainment, but not in the world.”

Well! this is going too far – this is some of the suspected doctrine of the Newtonian School. “Christ in the place of estrangement from God – in the place of Cain.” Who said this? Alas! Mr. Darby said it! It is to be found in Words of Truth, No. 36, p. 360.

But this author allows himself no small latitude in this style of imaginative writing – as again –

“He (Jesus) had the thorough and full sense upon his soul of the condition *in which man was in separation from God because of sin*; thus was all the weight of MAN'S POSITIVE ACTUAL SEPARATION FROM GOD on his soul, then forty days in the wilderness, just as, afterwards, the weight of wrath upon the cross.” – Words of Truth, vol. iii, 361.

APPENDIX D.

We have carefully given extracts of those passages from which matter of accusation has been drawn; justice now demands that some of the explanatory statements should also be appended; though even here, also, the implacable accusers step in to extract, or create, the poison.

Mr. Newton, in his Observations, has expressed himself as follows on “Vicariousness,” and reprinted it as an appendix in his Letter.

[15] ... “Substitutional suffering stands forward so prominently in Scripture, as a leading principle in all the divine acting, that we need not be taught it by minute words – nor depend upon the precision of their definition for the truth. We can fix the definition by their relation to the great fact to which they are applied. Who, after he had read the account of the ram caught and offered *for* Isaac, would doubt the fact of such substitution, or that the word *for*, if employed, would be used in the sense “instead of.” The word used in this passage, Gen. xxii, 13, is, in the Hebrew, tachath, in the Septuagent $\alpha\upsilon\tau\iota$ – all will say, that whatever meaning these words may have in other connections, yet that here they simply imply substitution.

“Abraham offered the ram for a burnt offering [sic] instead of his son.” Thus we are guided by their meaning in other similar connections.

“Again, if we had seen an Israelite lay his hand upon the head of his sin-offering – next had seen its blood shed – next had seen part of the victim burned on the altar for a sweet savour, and had then heard the Israelite say, ‘These things have been done on my behalf,’ (υπερ) should we doubt that the idea of substitution was included in his use of the word ‘on behalf of.’”

“Accordingly, we may safely say, that whenever the words αντι or υπερ occur in the New Testament, in relation to the offerings of Jesus to his people, they always include the notion of substitution. As used in the New Testament, αντι has always the sense of equivalent value paid as a ransom (see Matt. xx., 28, and Matt. x., 45), which connects our thoughts with the second part in the ceremony of offering the sin-offering just referred to. In this application, therefore, it of course includes the preceding fact, namely – the substitutional place of the victim, whose blood is made the price.”

... “One passage that proves how distinctly υπερ is used in the sense of substitution is this: ‘If one has died for all, then all have died.’ I should therefore say, that if we translate αντι for – in the sense of a price paid for the ransom or purchase of another thing – and translate υπερ – ‘on behalf of’ – yet that whenever employed sacrificially, they involve in their meaning the full force of substitution.”

Again, in the Letter, p. 45, note –

“I know of only one excuse that can be urged on behalf of those who maintain that the Lord Jesus never suffered under the hand of God until the cross, and it is this: – they see that there is an insuperable objection to saying what is commonly said, viz.: that he suffered throughout life as he did on the cross, for then he would always have been bearing damnatory wrath – in which case he could not have had the reliefs and sustainments which from time to time were abundantly granted by God, until the hour when he was made sin for us on the accursed tree. They were granted even in Gethsemane. The difficulty of saying, that he was always, as on the cross, under wrath, has been candidly confessed by Witsius. But we need not, because of this difficulty, be drawn into the more dangerous extreme of saying, that he never, until the cross, suffered anything under the hand of God. The solution of the difficulty is most easy when we admit, what facts will indeed constrain us to admit, that the governmental arrangements of God which were pressing heavily on man and on Israel, pressed heavily also on the Lord Jesus, because of his relative place of association [16] in which he had placed himself, and in which he voluntarily continued. These sufferings, though not the result of damnatory wrath, and not vicarious, *i. e.*, *instead* of us – in the same strict sense as the bearing of the wrath on the cross – were nevertheless vicarious in the general sense, *i. e.*, they were endured entirely on the behalf of others; and not one came on him as due to his own personal position. They were also all sacrificial in their character, for, amongst other types, the Lord Jesus is represented by the scorched meat-offering, and it was scorched before it was burned on the altar.”

A little tract of seven pages, in the form of question and an answer, was published by Mr. Newton, July 11, 1848. The tract opens with these words –

“The following brief statements, in the form of answers to questions, will be found to give the general substance of the doctrines which I hold, and desire to teach, on the subjects to which they refer with regard to our Lord’s humanity.”

In page 6 of this publication are the following queries: –

“Whether all the living sufferings of Christ were vicarious in the sense of being exclusively on behalf of others?”

“They were. He never suffered one sorrow except for *others* – none on his own account.

“Whether the living sufferings of Christ were vicarious in the strict sense of *instead of*?

“They were not – because if the Lord Jesus had suffered hunger, weariness, &c., instead of his people – in the same strict sense, as he bore wrath in their stead on the cross – they never would have suffered hunger or weariness any more.

“All the sufferings of his life were for us exclusively, and go to make up that perfect obedience which is imputed to all who believe – but the sufferings of his death were so strictly in our stead, that we can never, in any sort whatever, suffer the like. This gives its proper pre-eminence to the cross.”

In page 1 is this query –

“Whether the Athanasian, Nicene, and Apostles’ Creeds, may be received as embodying the statements of scripture on these subjects?

“They must never be appealed to as if they had the authority of scripture, for holy scripture is the alone standard in every controversy. But the statements of those creeds are so excellent, and in such close accordance with scripture, that every one who values the truth may well be thankful for them.

“I profess my cordial acquiescence in them.”

APPENDIX E.

“A statement from Christians assembling in the name of God, in Ebrington Street, Plymouth.”

This document is a tract of eight pages, dated January 10, 1848. As it is a declaration of the sentiments of those people who are especially put under the ban, and who are considered in such a state of moral and theological depravity, that the owning of them as Christians is an offence, which [17] incurs excommunication, *ipso facto*, our readers will be glad to have an opportunity of perusing their doctrines put forth by the authority of the heretics themselves.

“Our Lord was borne into the nation of Israel while that nation was suffering in many ways under God’s displeasure; but none of those things in which Christ shared, in consequence of their condition, could in any way involve his having such displeasure or any curse resting on him personally, any more than the consequences in which he shared from Adam’s sin (such as hunger and thirst), would imply an imputation of guilt to him. We disclaim the one thought as much as we do the other.

“With regard to our Lord’s connection with man or with Israel, and what he shared in as standing in such connections, we believe that it was his own voluntary grace, that he who was God eternally, had become man; and in so doing he *voluntarily* subjected himself to all those things which were involved in such connections, so far as it pleased God his father for him to be placed in them, this voluntary position could in no possible way affect the dignity of his person or perfectness of his work, nor yet could it indicate that something was laid on him which he had to remove, before he could become our substitute and sin-bearer. Nor could any relation, assumed by him in his own free *grace*, place him in moral distance from God, a position utterly impossible in itself; and perfectly abhorrent to every Christian mind and heart.”

“We believe that we may rightly speak of our Lord’s having shared, in all the common properties and infirmities of man’s nature, sin only excepted, as expressed in Heb. ii.

14. He took part of the same flesh and blood as those were partakers of, who in God's purpose, were his brethren; and he did this in order to die, that he might destroy him that had the power of death. He thus took a human body which was mortal, by which we mean a body capable of dying; he could only die as bearing the sins of others. He possessed life essentially in himself. He was the holy one of God. He also had a claim to live as the one who in all things obeyed the will of God. (See Luke x. 28 – Gal. iii. 12.) The man who doeth them shall live in them, and besides he could not die, except according to God's purpose as the sacrifice; and that not until the period of his living service had been accomplished. [sic] and the hour arrived of which it is said, 'Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.' As to the living feelings and experiences of the Lord Jesus, we do not consider that any thing which he could have experienced as a man or an Israelite, or that he might have felt in estimating before God the condition of others, would at all affect the dignity and perfectness of his person, and thus, however full his apprehension of the condition of man or of Israel, whatever he may have been pleased to feel, or to express on behalf of either, would not involve the thought that curse or imputation rested on him, nor that he ever ceased in true consciousness to feel as the Son; nor that any experiences which it may have pleased the Father that he should pass through, would involve the dividing of his person, or the rejection of his true experiences as the Sons such [sic] less that these could in any way be characterised as the experiences of moral distance from God. *We can not know any further than God has been pleased to reveal by his Spirit in the word*, that it was proper for Christ to feel, or not to feel, or how the Father might have been pleased to exercise [18] the soul of his dear Son, whilst he in living obedience, was working out that one righteousness in which we stand as believers in his name. Though he was a son yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered."

This last passage is remarkable, as it is virtually a reproof, whether accidental or intentional, of the visionary statements advanced on this august subject both by Mr. Newton and his chief opponent.

THE END.

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