Why I Abandoned Exclusivism

H. P. Barker

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Foreword To The Third Edition

Since the first and second editions of this booklet were issued, various public references to it have been made.

Criticism and personal abuse have not been lacking, but the facts stated admit of no denial, and no one has ventured to contravert them. I know of no Exclusive who has disputed the reasonableness of my remarks on III John 9, 10. One in California wrote me insisting on the unity of assemblies. When asked for Scripture proof, he simply quoted I Corinthians 11:16 and other passages which speak of the plurality of assemblies.

On the other hand, there have been gratifying testimonies to the booklet's usefulness. A letter that has reached me while preparing this third edition says: "'I was much helped by 'Why I Abandoned Exclusivism.' It has helped me to make my decision as to where, and with whom, the Lord would have me gather."

One is encouraged, therefore, to send it forth once more, not without prayer that God will graciously use it to release beloved brethren and sisters from their traditional prejudice, and emancipate them from their unscriptural position.

H. P. Barker

I. My Personal Narrative

By accident of birth and upbringing, and with the hot, intemperate dogmatism of youth, I became at an early age an adherent of one of the strictest fraternities in Exclusivism. I heard "open" brethren denounced as "a cesspool of iniquity," "the dirtiest ditch in Christendom," and "an imitation all the more dangerous because of its likeness to the real thing."

I am asked why I repeat such foolish and false statements. I do so because they were the very things that built me up in my prejudices, and are the kind of thing which to this day blinds many, and keeps them in the ranks of Exclusivism.

In 1908 a great smash-up occurred. A division, engineered by a few determined men in London, was forced upon unwilling saints. I found myself one of a minority who refused to be coerced into wrong-doing by metropolitan influence. And then a question began to claim an answer from my conscience: If this division was so evidently a work of the flesh, what of previous ones?

At first I was concerned only with the divisions among Exclusives. There was wide-spread exercise on the subject, and I attended conferences on both sides of the Atlantic which had for their object the reconciliation of divided parties. But the die-hards of the different sections clung to their positions and made healing of the breaches impossible. We may recognize the hand of God in this, for if reunion had been effected, the result would have been a new amalgamated party, swollen with complacency and self-satisfaction.

At all the conferences that I attended the brethren who took part reiterated the oldtime charges against "open" brethren and denounced what they called "Bethesdaism." But the accusations made by Exclusives against each other began to make me wonder whether, after all, there were substantial grounds for their charges against "Open" brethren. I determined to investigate, and to make my search for the truth as thorough and exhaustive as possible.

Surely the Scriptures are sufficient to guide us in the right way. That a certain position can only be understood and gain adherents by the study of pamphlets written by fallible men is enough to condemn it. But to search into the matter of how the difference between "Open" and "Exclusive" brethren arose, I had to have recourse to these pamphlets. I was at once confronted with the difficulty that they contradicted each other even as to matters of fact; I did not know which of them to believe!

A little later my attention was called to an article in the magazine Scripture Truth. The editor, the late J. T. Mawson, was traveling from England to Scotland with a little girl. After crossing the border he said: "Now we are in Scotland."

The girl looked out of the window and said: "No, this is not Scotland."

"Why do you say so?" asked Mr. M.

"Because in my map Scotland is yellow," she replied.

The child had formed a conception of Scotland as yellow, and was surprised to find its fields as green and its flowers as bright as any others. The writer added: "We have maps in which our brethren are yellow!"

Perhaps this article, more than any other single consideration, served to loosen Exclusivism's hold on me. I resolved to abandon my falsely colored map.

Neatby's History of the Plymouth Brethren then came into my hands. This writer had no ecclesiastical axe to grind; he was not connected with any section of those whose history he records. He seeks manifestly to be fair and accurate, quoting from contemporary documents in support of his statements. The perusal of this book opened my eyes, not only to the utter pettiness of the quarrels among Exclusives, but also as to the facts relating to the situation that arose at Bristol in 1848, when Exclusivism as a system began.

II. Mr. B. W. Newton

There was little, if any, divergence of opinion as to the heterodoxy of Mr. B. W. Newton's teaching. Mr. G. Müller, one of the leaders in the assembly at "Bethesda," summed it up by saying that if Mr. N.'s doctrines were true, Christ would Himself have needed a Savior. Whether this dictum was altogether just is a question that need not concern us, for Mr. N. recanted, and wrote a most penitent letter of confession with regard to what he had taught.

His letter is too long for insertion here, but in it he wrote as follows:

Recent circumstances having necessitated a careful review of the whole subject, I have been led, as I above stated, 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 fairly be deduced from this error, which I now desire explicitly to renounce, and I desire to acknowledge my error in having thus held and taught on this subject; 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.

The doctrine in question was, I believe, first stated by me in a part of the tract 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 as withdrawn, that they may not be regarded as now containing my sentiments, and that they may no longer be circulated.

I wish to state distinctly, that I hold the perfectness of Christ's person, and the completeness of His one sacrifice, to be truths so solemnly unquestionable, that every doctrine and opinion must be subordinated to, and guided by these leading and foundation truths; and every statement of mine on the relations of Christ, whether in my recent tracts, which I have now withdrawn, or in any other place, I wish to subject entirely to these primary truths. I desire that every statement with regard to such subordinate truth should be strictly guarded with the limitations which the aforementioned foundation truths supply.

It is not my desire to extend the present remarks. I would merely state that I do distinctly hold, that there never was anything in the personal, relative, or dispensational positions of Christ, which could have prevented His being at any one moment of His life, the perfect and unblemished sacrifice, and that not one suffering, whencesoever originating, ever came upon Him, except because of and for the sake of others.

I would not wish it to be supposed that what I have now said is intended to extenuate the error which I have confessed. I desire to acknowledge it fully, and to acknowledge it as sin; it is my desire thus to confess it before God and His Church; and I desire that this may be considered as an expression of my deep and unfeigned grief and sorrow especially by those who may

have been grieved or injured by the false statement, or by any consequences thence resulting. I trust that the Lord will not only pardon, but will graciously counteract any evil effects which may have arisen to any therefrom. B. W. Newton, Plymouth, November 26th, 1847.

The writer, from whose book I have taken the above extract says: "If it be asked why so thorough a confession and withdrawal did not end the controversy, the answer must be that Mr. Newton's opponents had ceased to walk in love, and therefore carnal influences, such as bitterness, ambition, a party spirit, overcame them." He adds: "It is to be remembered that this humble document was the work of a distinguished scholar and theologian. It shows how the grace of God can preserve from pride, by enabling one to humiliate himself publicly over public failure."

III. Exclusivism's Case

The crux of the whole case of Exclusivism is that persons coming from the meeting at Plymouth, where Mr. Newton was in fellowship, were received at Bethesda, Bristol. It is not asserted that these persons had imbibed Mr. N.'s errors; the charge against them was merely that they had continued with the meeting where Mr. N. broke bread. They were "received" at Bethesda, and those who read this statement are left to suppose that intercommunion between Mr. N.'s meeting and the meeting at Bethesda existed and was permitted.

What are the facts? It must be remembered that no charge of heterodoxy was ever preferred against Mr. Newton because of any utterance of his in the Plymouth assembly. It was at Bible readings of a more private nature, held in the houses of certain individuals, and subsequently in explanatory tracts, that he had set forth his views. Many of those in fellowship had no knowledge of what was going on, and were quite unaware that they were regarded as the accomplices of a heterodox teacher. Some of these removed from Plymouth to Bristol. It was not a case of coming and going, but of leaving one city for the other for good. Their reception therefore (as explained by a brother at Bethesda) was a rescue.

One who thus went to live at Bristol and was received at Bethesda was a Captain Woodfall. He not only did not hold Mr. N.'s errors, but did not believe that Mr. N. himself held them! He distributed Mr. N.'s tracts among the saints at Bethesda with the object of proving that Mr. N. did not hold the doctrines with which he was

charged. After a while Captain Woodfall paid a visit to Plymouth and broke bread at Mr. N.'s meeting. This raised a point that had not been considered, and he was told that it could not be permitted and that he would be rebuked before the assembly if he did it again. Whereupon he and his brother withdrew from fellowship at Bethesda. The question was mooted: What would have been done in the case of Captain Woodfall not withdrawing, but persisting in going to Mr. N's meeting? The answer was that he would have been excluded from fellowship at Bethesda.

This extreme discipline would have been meted out, be it observed, not to one who held Mr. N.'s errors, or went where they were taught, but to one who merely broke bread at a meeting where the heterodox teacher was. Surely the Bethesda brethren raised a very effectual barrier to the entrance of the evil doctrine among them. They were as zealous in the cause of truth as any of the Exclusives, but they sought to act without undue haste, and without injustice. What then becomes of Mr. Darby's accusation that "Bethesda deliberately accredited blasphemers against Christ," and of Mr. W. Kelly's assertion that "Open Brethrenism . . . is founded as a society on indifference to a true or a false Christ"? Neither statement bears even a remote semblance to truth, but this is the sort of thing that poisons the minds of many, and causes them to have maps on which their brethren and sisters are colored yellow.

Several brethren have told me of a manuscript in the possession of the late Dr. Bergin, of Bristol. It was the diary of a godly old elder at Bethesda. It had lain in a desk for fifty years, and was given by the widow to Dr. Bergin. The notes of the brethren's meetings were

carefully kept, and his statements, written a few hours after the meetings, flatly contradict Mr. Darby's account in simple matters of fact. Which is the more likely to be trustworthy: this account by one who was present, or Mr. Darby's, derived from others?

IV. The Principles Of Reception

The principles on which the brethren at Bethesda, and the "Open" brethren generally, receive to communion are lucidly set forth in an eight-page "Statement" that fell into my hands at the time of my deepest exercise and played no inconsiderable part in ridding my mind of the misconception that I had cherished. In 1894, a letter, signed by fourteen representative brethren, had been issued, containing eight clauses explanatory of the principles of fellowship which they believed to be according to the Scriptures. The first four clauses, which are relevant to the matter in hand, are as follows:

"1. Those commonly known as 'Open' brethren only seek to maintain liberty to carry out all the will of God as unfolded in the Scriptures, and to receive all believers who are not plainly disqualified by the Word of God, because of evil doctrine or immoral practice.

"2. Intercommunion is not permitted with assemblies where the false doctrine of 'annihilation' or other fundamental error is tolerated. (Italics mine).

"3. Although cases of reception of persons holding such false doctrines have been alleged, they have not been substantiated when proof was requested.

"4. On the contrary, cases have now and again occurred (though we are thankful to say, not frequently) in which persons holding such doctrines have been put away from fellowship."

The signatories of this letter have long ago been called to their rest. But in 1906, as the "Statement" informs us,

a Conference was held at Bristol to consider these matters.

"The so-called 'Letter of the Ten' came under discussion, and it was stated by those representing Bethesda that there were good reasons for not withdrawing or amending that letter. They pointed out that all those who signed it have since passed away, and cannot now be appealed to; that the statement was published without any authority from them or the church, and without the verbal explanations which accompanied it (italics mine), and that the church cannot be held responsible for the misunderstandings that have arisen out of that action; that, rightly understood, there is nothing in it that they should wish to withdraw, but that interpretations and meanings have been read into the statement which it does not, and never was, intended to bear (italics mine); and that as a statement it was made only for the occasion which called it forth, and has, so far as Bethesda is concerned, been non-existent since December, 1848, when the peculiar doctrine known as Mr. B. W. Newton's was definitely judged to be so fundamentally erroneous that no fellowship with it, or with upholders of it, or those continuing in wilful association with it, could be received (italics mine).

"It was then asked whether, to meet the prevalent misconceptions in certain quarters, Christians of Bethesda would define their present position . . . and a Bethesda brother then suggested that if it would remove difficulties out of the way, Bethesda might be asked . . . to endorse the statement of the fourteen. This met with approval."

So the letter signed by the fourteen representative brethren, of which we have given the four relevant clauses, was endorsed by the assembly at Bethesda. It was signed on their behalf by eleven of their leaders. It has always struck me as grossly unfair that Exclusive writers should launch their attacks upon "open" brethren and completely ignore both the "Letter" of 1894, and the "Statement" of 1906.

The famous "Letter of the Ten" must be interpreted in the light of what its signatories did. It has been taken by Exclusives to mean that intercommunion with a meeting where a heterodox teacher was would be tolerated, provided that the persons coming and going were themselves sound in the faith. Nothing could be further from the truth. There was to be no coming and going. The "reception" was intended as rescue, and no intercommunion was to be permitted. We must give the Bethesda brethren credit for honesty when they affirm this.

This did not satisfy J. N. Darby and his friends. Bethesda must be refused, and all who received anyone coming from this ultra-orthodox assembly must share its excision. With this extreme attitude, quite beyond anything contemplated or enjoined by Scripture, Exclusivism as a system began. Many of the Protestant denominations started by way of protest against some evil, but Exclusivism commenced in 1848 as an unscriptural system founded on misrepresentation.

Its later developments have been tragic. Division after division has shattered its ranks. To classify or name the various sections would be useless, as fresh ones are formed from time to time. The sections are all hostile to

each other, though there have been cases where two, and even three, have amalgamated. But God has blown upon the pretentiousness of Exclusivism. Many have been delivered from it, not only individuals, but assemblies. A number of "Grant" assemblies in the States and Canada, and of "Kelly," "Lowe," and "Stuart" assemblies in Britain, and some of those known as "Glanton," have pulled down their sectional flag and have ceased to be Exclusives. Holy exclusiveness of evil men and things is maintained, but exclusivism has been abandoned.

Recognized leaders in the various parties, such as Walter Scott (of the "Stuart" section), W. W. Fereday (of the "Kelly" section), Alfred Mace (of the "Raven" section), Harold St. John (of the "Lowe" section), and John Bloore (of the "Grant" section), having seen how destructive of practical unity the Exclusive system is, have been enabled to lead others into the more Scriptural way. At the time of writing two of these whom I have named are still living, and continue their helpful ministry in the assemblies.

Alas, that other leaders are missing their great opportunity to win the blessedness of Matthew 5:9. What a reward would be theirs in the day that is coming if they would labor to foster unity and peace, instead of bolstering up the state of division that exists!

V. Independence

The more intelligent Exclusives now admit that the charge of "Newtonianism" brought against "open" brethren is groundless. They acknowledge that their soundness in the faith is unimpeachable. But they justify their continued aloofness on the ground that the "open" assemblies are independent of one another, and that therefore discipline cannot be exercised.

Now Scripture is silent as to any relation between churches. We find in it no trace of any inter-church organization. The one Body of Christ is not formed of assemblies, but of individual members. A Scripture that helped me in connection with this matter is III John 10. Exclusives have built their structure on their interpretation of II John 10, 11, but have paid very little attention to the implications of this other passage.

There were certain brethren cast out of what the apostle still calls "the church" for no reason but that they would have received some whom Diotrephes did not. They were evidently good men, lovers of truth. They were excluded from "the church" at one place, but does this imply that they would be excluded from every other church? If so, the apostle himself would have to be excluded everywhere. Exclusives would reply, of course, that the reception of these brethren would involve the disowning as an assembly of the company that cast them out. But John still calls it "the church," though undoubtedly he would have received those cast out therefrom. He had not been instructed in the principles of Exclusivism!

The truth appears to be that there was, and must be, a certain independence exercised by each assembly. Each church, consisting of all the Christians in the locality, is locally the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:27) and is to act accordingly. As a well-known writer aptly says:

"By speaking of the 'churches' in the plural whenever more than one local assembly was intended, the Lord has manifestly signified that every several assembly, consisting of all the believers of any one place or district, should be independent and self-governed—a microcosm of the Church which is His Body. Had this intimation been respected, no room would have been found for sects, for national and international churches or for any such idea as the Union, or Reunion, of Christendom. And, when error appeared in any particular assembly, its members would have had the power of instantly ejecting the false teachers, just as the local churches were wont to do in the earliest days of Christianity. There could have been no interference from other infected churches. . . . Who can look back upon the history of the past without detecting the many disasters that are due to this single divergence from the Divine pattern!"

A plea often urged against the independence of assemblies is that discipline is thereby rendered impossible. We are reminded that what is bound on earth is bound in heaven, and therefore every act of "binding" by any assembly must be endorsed by every other. It is a sufficient reply to this to point out that no Exclusive meeting recognizes the discipline of every assembly, but only that of certain ones. They pick and choose as it suits them. Nor do they attach the same importance to "loosing" as they do to "binding."

Collective forgiveness has no place in their system. World-wide division is the result.

What form of independence can be worse than that of federations of meetings, each federation being entirely independent of all the others? This is exactly the situation that has arisen. To show how it reacts upon discipline—a recent case may be referred to.

A man was put out from an "open" meeting in an eastern European country for gross wickedness. No other "open" meeting would receive him, of course. But he went off to an Exclusive meeting, where, without inquiry, he was received both for fellowship and as a preacher. To such procedure does the formation of rings, or independent communities of assemblies, lend itself.

The truth that "there is one Body" is hardly relevant. For the setting of this great truth in Scripture shows that it is intended to be a powerful spiritual force rather than an ecclesiastical one. Indeed we hardly gather from the New Testament that the fact of there being "one Body" (in the sense of Eph. 4:4) is a reason for Christians meeting together in assembly. The truth of the one Body is a reason why we should:

(1) Not think of ourselves more highly than we ought, but soberly (Rom. 12:3-5).

(2) Put away lying, and speak every man truth with his neighbor (Eph. 4:25). Would that those who traduce their brethren were "on the ground of the one Body" in their souls. Their misrepresentations would then cease!

(3) Let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts (Col. 3:15, R. V.).

(4) Fulfil the service committed to us as members of an organic whole (I Cor. 12:12-20).

(5) Care for one another, suffering with those that suffer, rejoicing with those that are honored (I Cor. 12:21-27).

For my own part, I attach more importance than ever to the truth of the one Body. To me it is a tremendous reality. I have had fellowship with saints in twenty-six countries and with believers of many nationalities. I have sat down at the Lord's Supper with Andalusian campesinos, Ukrainian mujiks, Chinese, Indians, Syrians, and others and the unity that exists has been forcibly borne in upon my soul. But to speak of being "gathered on the ground of the one Body," and to invoke this great truth in order to secure unity of discipline, is to go outside the bounds of Scripture. To make it a reason for binding together a certain number of meetings, so that they shall form a confederation, is nothing less than a travesty of one of the most vital truths of Christianity.

That the great religious corporations around us are denials of the truth of the one Body is no reason for forming smaller corporations that equally contradict it. It has been well said that when two or more assemblies combine to act for an ecclesiastical purpose, a sect is formed.

Federation of assemblies has been Satan's imitation of the One Body from a very early period. It has always had a baneful result. It is the same today. In Nigeria, according to a writer in World Dominion, there are some 1200 churches independent of the various missionary societies, some of them on very simple, primitive lines. But, starting to combine, they have divided up into

fifteen denominations. In the countries of eastern Europe a similar tendency has shown itself. There were hundreds of simple, Scriptural assemblies, but sectarian propagandists have persuaded many of these to federate into "unions" and "fellowships." Others, happily, have resisted this tendency, and remain outside the groups that have been formed. It is difficult to see wherein these groups of assemblies differ from the exclusive communities, except that there is no absolute barrier to fellowship between those in the East. A brother belonging to a meeting in one union would not necessarily be debarred from fellowship at a meeting in another group.

It is admitted that in days of confusion like these the exercise of Scriptural discipline sometimes has its difficulties and anomalies. But I have found that, as a general rule, discipline among "Open" brethren is as effective as among Exclusives. A person put out from one assembly, with sufficient reason, finds himself outside all, and if he applies for fellowship elsewhere he is referred back to the assembly from which he was excluded, and inquiry is made of the brethren there. There are, I repeat, anomalous cases, but I state the general practice.

VI. With Whom To Walk

It is often affirmed that "Open" brethren have no ministry among them beyond what is quite elementary. This assertion comes chiefly from the members of the Taylorite body. It is insinuated by them, however, not only with reference to "Open" brethren, but with regard to all other sections of Exclusives. They boast that they alone have "a living ministry." But when one examines the writings of their leaders, especially the volumes of "Readings" that follow one another in rapid succession, one is amazed at the puerilities that pass for "ministry." To such eccentricities of exegesis it would be hard to find a parallel!

It must be remembered that evangelistic work carried on by "Open" brethren has brought large numbers of young people and others into their ranks, and that it is right that suited ministry should be given for such. Hence much of it is of an elementary nature. But at Conferences and other occasions ministry is given that is at least equal to anything that I have known among Exclusives. It would be invidious to mention names, but there are several among the "open" brethren to whom I should like to make grateful acknowledgement for their helpful teaching. I may truly say that I have learned from them to read the Scriptures with keener discernment. It would be difficult to find anywhere more gifted and devoted teachers of the Word than among "open" brethren, men whose gracious ministry is proving helpful to thousands. I am sure that the taunt of Exclusives is untrue.

It is also said that little real worship is to be found in the "open" meetings, that even at the breaking of bread there is much more thanksgiving than worship, and that many do not seem to rise higher in their thoughts than that they have been saved and blessed through the death of Christ.

But supposing this were true, what is the criterion set before us in the New Testament? In days of widespread defection what is to guide us? What description is given of the people with whom we are to walk? Are we to look out for those who have "a unique ministry" or those who understand worship?

No; we are bidden to follow things of spiritual excellence with "them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." (II Tim. 2:22). Wherever I find people calling on the Lord out of a pure heart, that is, with simplicity of aim, I am to follow the things named with them. My inquiry is not to be as to their ministry or their worship, but as to their spiritual character. I am not to join with them to form an ecclesiastical corporation, large or small, but in the pursuit of righteousness, faith, love, and peace. How charmingly simple!

Exclusives lay great stress on this verse, but what helped finally to emancipate me from their system was the certainty that they were not following the things mentioned. It is not righteousness to continue to level against others charges which have been proved to be false. It is not following faith, when ecclesiastical difficulties arise, to take matters into our own hands and separate from all who do not agree with our decisions, instead of seeking wisdom and help from God, and having confidence in Him. As to love, we are bidden to

"be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love" (Rom. 12:10). It is the opposite of this to be ready to believe the worst of our brethren and sisters, to refuse to recognize them in any way and even pass them in the street without so much as a glance. Happily all Exclusives are not like this, but are free from the unchristian bigotry that underlies such an attitude. They are courteous and willing to converse with us on the things of God. Manifestly it is not following peace to cherish principles which are productive of discord and division.

Realizing this, I decided to look for Christians who are calling on the Lord out of a pure heart, with whom I might follow these four good and desirable things. Thank God, one does not have to look far in order to find them.

Of recent years it has been a favorite device of Taylorite Exclusives to apply Numbers 19:15 to "open" brethren and sisters, insinuating that they are like an uncovered vessel, open to contamination, and therefore unclean. Contamination is surely a thing that we should guard against. But the covering that will preserve us from it is not a man-made ecclesiastical rule, but the realization of the holy presence of God. This produces a due response and suitable behavior on our part. To spend time alone with Him in prayer and worship, and to gather fresh thoughts of Him and His beloved Son by meditation on the Scriptures, is the way to get a covering for our souls that will protect us from contamination. Would that Exclusives, of the kind that I have referred to, knew more of this! Their conduct and attitude would then be very different.

A brother in one of the meetings formerly Exclusive writes: "What a change would be wrought in the Lord's people if we were each deeply exercised to be clean before the Lord and ceased to look for faults and failings in others!"

VII. A Final Word

It is not surprising that the enemy has sought to introduce havoc-working principles among "open" brethren. Under the guise of "Needed Truth" an attack was made on the truths connected with the constitution and government of the assemblies. Happily this movement has pretty well petered out, largely through internal dissensions.

But there are those of a kindred spirit who claim for themselves and their adherents (by a distortion and misquotation of Matthew 18:20) the distinctive title of "Believers Gathered unto the Name of the Lord," and they refuse fellowship to all, however godly, who have not been formally received into one of their meetings. The power of this -ism, however, is waning. Many have been delivered from it. I would warn my friends who have been emancipated from the bonds of the Exclusive system, to have nothing to do with this spurious imitation, which resembles the error of those at Corinth who appropriated Christ's Name in an exclusive way (I Corinth. 1:12), thus constituting themselves sectarians indeed.

Dr. T. Neatby (father of the historian) was a leading brother among the "Kelly" Exclusives. In 1887, seeing the indefensibility of his position, he left them, and was in fellowship with "open" assemblies till his death in 1911. Referring to his Exclusive days, he said: "In 1884 I wrote a paper in which I claimed for those with whom I met for worship that they exclusively were 'gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus.' What Corinthian carnality! Two years later I publicly confessed my grave

error." (For a fuller discussion of this matter may I refer the reader to my pamphlet In My Name, published by Loizeaux Bros. Inc., New York).

But I am not anxious to persuade people to become "open brethren," but am desirous only that everything should be abandoned that prevents our being Christians after the New Testament pattern—just Christians, and nothing more. Why should we not turn from the controversies of the past and hold out the hand of fellowship to one another, forgiving one another for the past as we are bidden in Ephes. 4:32?

A school teacher once held up before his class a large sheet of white paper with a little black spot on it. He asked the boys: "What do you see?" Not one said "A large sheet of white paper." One and all replied: "A black spot."

It is like that with Exclusives. They ignore all the white in those from whom they stand frigidly aloof, their loyalty to the Person of Christ, their firm adherence to the great truths of Christianity, their zeal in preaching the glad tidings, the numbers of them engaged in missionary work all over the world, and their devoted and self-sacrificing labors. Exclusives do not refer to these things. All that they can see is a black spot.

Or again, let the white stand for all that we hold in common, the vast area of truth as to which there is no shade of divergent belief between us. Let the black spot stand for the few things, none of them doctrinally fundamental, as to which we may differ. Are we to view the white sheet as non-existant? This is what Exclusivism does. All that is of Christ in those from whom they have separated counts for nothing; they see

only a black spot, which exists in their own eyes rather than in those whom they criticize and condemn.

Was it not just such people that the Lord had in mind when He asked: "Why beholdest thou the mote (a speck of dust) that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam (a block of wood) that is in thine own eye?" (Matt. 7:3).

It is not that Exclusives transgress their principles in acting like this. It is their principles that make them do it. Far from being "divine principles," they are principles which, judging from their fruit, are not of God at all. It would be well if all of us were to talk less about "observing divine principles" and give more thought, as Paul did, to "the keeping of the commandments of God" (I Corinthians 7:19). In I John 2:3 we read, not "hereby we do know that we know Him if we observe divine principles," but "hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." Principles may be very nebulous; commandments are definite.

Consider the sad results to which the observing of Exclusive principles leads. With Modernism ravaging the denominations, with worldliness and the mad race after pleasure on all sides, with the increasing impatience at restraint of any kind, we Christians who know the Lord and have a large measure of truth are divided and scattered. It is a veritable tragedy.

As a recent writer has suggested, our position as children of God and messengers of Christ in a world where pagan darkness is increasing, even in lands where Christianity was once held in regard, should weld us together. The scandal of our divisions cries aloud, and

the state of things around constitutes a strong plea for unity.

Yet underneath it all, is there no love for one another? If persecution came, and an "open" brother and an "exclusive" found themselves together in a prison cell, would the one continue to look askance at the other? Would they not have sweet and holy fellowship together?

During the world war of late years there were happy instances of fellowship in prayer and service between young men from "open" and Exclusive meetings, driven together by compulsion, especially among men in the N. C. C. companies. Must we wait for persecution, or for a fiercer war, to give permanence to this? Should we not let the operation of "that blessed hope" draw us nearer to each other? The preposition of Coloss. 1:5 is a causative one. Paul speaks of "the love which ye have to all the saints because of the hope" (R. V.).

When He for Whom we look comes, will He find us like the servants in Luke 12:37 and 43, or like the quarrelsome one in verse 45? "Be diligent that ye may be FOUND of Him (1) in peace, (2) without spot, (3) blameless" (II Peter 3:14). At the beginning the prime emphasis was on purity (James 3:17), for James is perhaps the earliest of the Epistles. But II Peter, one of the latest, and written for the last times, puts peace first. Should not this have weight with us?

Scatterings and divisions are the opposite of peace. They are the work of the wolf (John 10:12) and are fleshly in their origin. We are bidden to avoid those who cause them (Rom. 16:17). And those who maintain them are as guilty as those who originate them. Some are

ready to acknowledge the shame of division, but no real recovery can be expected till the sin of it is confessed.

Some may say that it is men who cause divisions contrary to the doctrine we have learned whom we are to avoid. True; but how evil in God's sight it must be when causeless schism is made without even the plea of doctrinal differences! As a matter of fact, however, the division caused and maintained by Exclusives is contrary to the vital doctrine of the unity of the Body of Christ.

Is it too much to hope and pray for, that many now maintaining the wall of separation and division may yet seek to gain the blessedness of Matthew 5:9, and be found standing shoulder to shoulder with their fellow-believers against the flowing tide of sin, lawlessness, and hatred of God that characterizes the world today, and in seeking to publish the gospel to the ends of the earth, while awaiting the Saviour from heaven?

Will the appeal to my readers to "hear the right" be in vain? There are two attitudes of mind that will prevent their heeding it.

With regard to the one, the late Dr. Aggrey wrote: "You can never beat prejudice by a frontal attack, for there is mere emotion at its root." Emotion, in the form of traditional attachment to certain views, certain men, and even certain places of meeting, will in many cases suffice to make one impervious to any Scripture, or scriptural reason, that is brought forward.

As to the second mental attitude, Dr. Paley wrote: "There is a principle which is a bar against all information, and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance. This principle is contempt prior to investigation." This principle, more than any other,

closes the minds of people, even Christian people, against the entrance of truth.

I have little hope that the message of this booklet will be heeded by those whose gaze is backward and traditional. It is to those whose eyes are turned upward and forward that the appeal is addressed.

Appendix

Since sending the foregoing to the press, we have come across the following article in a British magazine, Dawn, which gives details as to the present state of things among the Taylorite Exclusives. The Editor, in an introductory note, says: "More tragic details could be given of the terror and self-righteousness such exclusiveness tends to produce. The terror engendered is identical with that in the most schismatic of all sects, the Church of Rome . . . It is astounding to learn, and deeply instructive, that there were early Christians who thought it right to excommunicate the Apostle John (III John 9)."

The writer of the article, Thos. Durrant, refers to the time when he was associated with the Taylorite Exclusives, and says:

One felt glad the "Eternal Son" question did not arise during my time with them, though hearing a great deal about it through relatives. The view was taken that Christ was Son in incarnation but not before; anyone pressing the general view has been excommunicated. I was myself excommunicated nine years ago (after being in fellowship 25 years) upon the extraordinary charge of "Speaking against Moses," the brethren presumably being meant. I had spoken only against certain serious sin, and human subtlety in dealing with a painful matter.

I would first speak of more general exercises and difficulties arising earlier. For instance, the dropping of all work among children, or Sunday Schools, which appeared to me to be partly caused by the lack of the needed devotion. Two large Schools were at first in

being in the City where I was; but various reasons were given for letting them die out. Then there was excessive occupation with trifling things, such as whether the Notices should be read before or after the Meeting; and even the order in which they should appear. On visiting a brother at Oxford, my host was quite shocked when I said that to me no great issue was involved; because all about the country the question was being solemnly discussed. Later, regarding the Lord's Supper, that one Cup only should be used; from which all must partake however many, and no pouring of the Wine from one vessel to others—for convenience of numbers, as always had been done before.

My greatest difficulty of later years was the extraordinary fear of brethren which has grown up, the horror of which cannot be explained to anyone not having had such an experience. I am speaking of matters of which none outside of the said company of brethren can have personal knowledge, strangers being entirely excluded from what are called "Assembly Meetings," and, what are worse, the "Brothers' Meetings" leading up to them, from which all Sisters are excluded. I suffered months of mental agony in these "Brothers' Meetings," as any difference of judgment or exercise of conscience is treated as a sin against the assembly of God, all actions of theirs, however unsuitable, being held to be of "Assembly Character." It is Infallibility in another guise. I am, of course, not excluding the fact that there must be the proper exercise of discipline as to any sin or dishonour of the Lord, in His House.

The final scenes (omitting details which are better not published) arose out of a very painful domestic matter.

We were obliged to discover (1) gross sin and cruelty; (2) in spite of confessions, a person being advised by his brethren in neglect of his plain duty; (3) the presence of an unholy traffic; (4) worse than all, evasion and denials of self-evident facts; and (5) the holding of an Assembly discipline Meeting purposely hidden from those mainly concerned, when a private Meeting of all parties with two or three older brethren had been promised according to Scripture. The "brethren" having hopelessly involved the whole matter (thus frustrating all Godly efforts by Christian friends who were suffering the pain and sorrow, and knew the facts, to bring to a right conclusion) washed their hands of responsibility by excommunicating all concerned. I was informed that I must meet my brethren on I Cor. 6 alone and not mention what led up to it and this was my last painful brothers' Meeting, eight being present. One somewhat friendly met me at the station, saying it was said or plainly hinted that any who agreed with me would suffer the same fate. I kept simply to facts; and answered once that "one loved the brethren," but not feared the brethren. All abandoned me not because anything could be gained said but because of this all prevailing fear. Six days after I received the dread formula—"We can no longer walk with . . . " My wife and son wrote in a Christian spirit the following week withdrawing from the Meetings because of these unholy actions: but were excommunicated.

That none will exercise their individual consciences can only be accounted for by this terrible fear of being cut off. Your dearest friend will leave you and relatives have little or no association. My brother (who knew these facts and had seriously queried them to his brethren but

in another town) died suddenly five years later and I attended the burial. All stood afar off, and because I prayed, as desired by his widow, at the close, by the graveside a brother (a stranger to me and to the facts, one would judge) threatened me with the Lord's Judgment.

In spite of all, one has sought to do the brethren (all of them) good, knowing the passing from "death to life because of loving the brethren" and many even of my own previous Meetings have admitted their wrong-doing, yet leaving the matter where it was. Also certain public revelations have caused misgivings in some minds. God has given me the joy of seeking the blessing of His scattered ones, preaching the Gospel, and with ten or so praying men has brought in hundreds to the glorious Advent messages in a large district.

To refer again to the fear which it is almost impossible to describe, none will risk opposing any matter brought up because it is plainly hinted and openly said that any one supporting would be dealt with in the same way. One prominent member of my own Meeting said he feared being put away more than he would penal servitude. Another, a writer among them, refers to it as the "capital punishment" of Christianity. It is also pressed that anyone so dealt with is not fit for fellowship with any Christian company. What might be true of the Church of God as such is made to apply to this particular Company at all times and in all conditions, whether their action will bear examination or not.

I observed that there were very many wealthy brethren; with the consequence of which the Lord warns; that the heart inclines where the treasure is. One would like to

make clear that very much precious abstract truth is held; and the earlier leaders were devoted men, who having parted with their prospects and often wealth, were used of God greatly. Also I had and have respect for many among them now; in fact it is difficult to account for much that is paradoxical. May it be that truth cannot be held merely in the abstract, it must be put into practice; or you are not held by it? Or, seeking to avoid one set of errors, diving into others?

II Appendix

Since this edition of "Why I Abandoned Exclusivism" was prepared for the press, a booklet called "A Grave Danger" has been issued by a "Kelly" publisher in London in which a statement of W. Kelly's is reproduced (page 16) to the effect that what he calls "Open Brethrenism" is "founded as a society on indifference to a true or a false Christ." It reminds us of what we read recently about a dog, accompanying its owner on a walk, chasing a chipmunk till it dashed through a hole in a wall too small to allow the dog to follow. The dog barked furiously, not only then, but on every occasion for weeks afterwards when it came within sight of that hole. Why should our fellow-believers, with whom no difference in doctrine exists, still keep up a misunderstanding made a hundred years ago? Even today they bark as furiously as ever at any suggestion of mutual forgiveness. How grievous it must be to the heart of God! In view of the great things for which we look, we are bidden to be diligent to be found, when the Lord comes, in peace (Pet. 3:14), as well as spotless and blameless. Peace comes first, the contrast of disagreement and disunion. Does not the present state of things offer a fine opportunity to leaders among all sections of brethren to win the blessing of Matt. 5:9? It would be a display of the divine nature, proving that they are rightly called "sons of God."