

Brethren after the Bethesda Division

The Testimony of the two sections of Brethren contrasted.

From the time of the division - called the Bethesda division - the path of each section of Brethren has been perfectly distinct and widely apart. The open Brethren have fraternised with the denominations and in many things come so near to them that they have escaped persecution. Indeed the bitterest attacks against the Brethren have come from them; so that in this they are at one with the denominations, and have helped them on in their opposition. Comparatively little in the way of a written testimony has issued from the press of the open Brethren; but, thank God, they have been zealous in the work of the Gospel; and by this means many of their meetings have been increased by simple believers who know nothing of the past troubles, or the present ground of fellowship. May their hearts in simplicity be nourished with Christ and the truth as it is in Him! But while the division seems to have silenced nearly all spiritual testimony from one side of Brethren, it increased the ministry of the other tenfold. Their books and tracts on the most important and vital truths of scripture were widely spread over this country, and indeed over all Christendom, carrying divine light and blessing to thousands of precious souls. It was also observed that there was more clearness, fulness, and definiteness in their teaching after the division than before, especially as to the heavenly relations of the church, the union of Christians with Christ in the glory, the rapture of the saints before the tribulation, &c. &c., for although the Brethren may have held all these truths in principle, they had never been preached with the same freshness and power as now. The effect of this testimony was felt everywhere. Many earnest Christians in various places feeling the dead state of things around them, were led to read these books and to search the Scriptures as to whether the new doctrines were in accordance with the Word of God. Numbers were convinced of their soundness, left their different denominations, and united with the Brethren. The new motto on the standard of the open Brethren was, "The blood of the Lamb is the union of the saints." Certainly there could be no union without the precious blood of God's spotless Lamb; but scripture teaches that the blood is the ground of peace, not the centre of union: the roasted Lamb, the Christ that had passed through the holy fire of divine justice for us, now risen and glorified, is the centre of union. (Ex. 12). In 1 Cor. 5 we learn that the assembly must be exclusive, if it would maintain a wholesome discipline, & keep the house of God clean enough for His presence, This is "Exclusivism." Because of their wide and open door to the Lord's table, the Bethesda gatherings have been called "The Open Brethren."

A.M.

* a revised tract of S. P. Teggall, written some 10 or 12 years before.