

We have received a bewildering mass of correspondence relative to "A Prophetic Letter," which is for the most part very discursive, and would call forth a still larger number in reply. We have not space to pursue the subject. The fact remains that the exclusion of George Müller, and those in fellowship with him, is still the and those in fellowship with the exclusive Brethren, though nearly forty years have passed away since the Darby-Newton controversy arose, and few of this generation know anything at all about it. Indeed, we never met a score of persons who had any intelligent knowledge of the errors charged against Mr. Newton, and which he more or less definitely retracted.

Those errors consisted in false conclusions drawn from the Psalms as to the wrath of God resting on the Lord Jesus on account of his connection with the race of Adam, and more particularly with his covenant people—Israel. Such mistakes would have been avoided, we believe, had it been remembered that the Son of God became incarnate, not by direct generation from Adam, but that He entered the human family by the direct interposition of Divine power. He was truly man, but He was the only One of his mother, the Choice One of her that bare Him. "That Holy Thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Glorious Edward Irving would never have conceived his outrageous error concerning Jesus, nor B. W. Newton the faint echo of it which he afterwards withdrew, had they remembered "the mystery of his holy incarnation."

In our judgment, God and time have decided John Darby's case against Bethesda, in George Müller's favour. For Mr. Darby increasingly lost spiritual power and influence from that time until he died; his course being marked, wherever he went, by divided families and unhappy homes; while George Müller has been increasingly owned and used of God, and honoured by his people; and at an age to which few men attain, is still evangelising round the world, leaving his spiritual children in all nations.

It is doubtless the fact that many truths expounded by the exclusive Brethren have largely influenced for good the evangelical Christians of this half-century; but had they remained in harmony with other Christians, instead of cutting them off, the influence of love would have been added to that of truth.

F. G. to D.

MY DEAR MR. D.,—Will you kindly favour me by reading this "Prophetic Letter" in my little paper, THE CHRISTIAN.—Yours affectionately in the Lord,  
F. G.

D. to F. G.

MY DEAR MR. G.,—At your request I have read Mr. Groves's letter in THE CHRISTIAN. Why don't the editor have the honesty to publish Mr. Darby's reply? My dear Mr. G., I am surprised you read such a paper as THE CHRISTIAN. What would Mr. Groves think of this letter thrust forth into Christendom in such a paper? This paper is a nut without any kernel, husks and no wheat. It is Antichrist to read such a paper. I do not wonder, my dear Mr. G., that your opinion of us is the same as Mr. Groves. "Come out, and be separate." Everywhere this sect ("the Brethren") is spoken against.—Your servant in Christ,  
D.

Groves to Darby.

The following few sentences from Groves' Memoirs, show what gave rise to his writing the letter on opposite page. "The year Mr. Groves spent at home (on a visit to England from Bagdad) was a chequered one. He had great sympathy with the people of God in Bristol, and in the North of Devon, and thankfully ministered among them; and he visited, for a short time, the Brethren at Plymouth. Here he found less comfort, feeling that their original bond of union in the truth as it is in Jesus, had changed for a united testimony against all who differed from them. What this change amounted to in his mind may be gathered from a letter he wrote, on leaving England, to a brother whom he highly esteemed and loved, and who had formed one of their original number in Dublin and had been mainly instrumental in organizing a meeting of a similar kind in Plymouth." The letter is given in full in the Appendix to the Memoirs; & the following in a footnote on p. 357. "It seems but justice to the departed to give his views as they were, those who read this letter must judge for themselves whether he or his friend [J. N. D.] knew best in what the true unity of believers consists. To many who have lived to see the results of the evils he speaks of, the letter in question seems almost prophetic."

This letter of A. N. Groves to J. N. Darby was republished in "The Christian" for Sept 23<sup>rd</sup> 1887, under the heading "A Prophetic Letter". Its publication gave rise to some correspondence, some of which will be found on pp. 71 & 72, also the printed notes above. It also gave rise to an article in the "Bible Treasury", inserted on following page.

(See W.K.'s Letter Jan. 1901.)

The "Remarks on a Prophetic Letter" inserted here were written by Mr. Robert Beacon of Guernsey, one of the oldest of Brethren there.

## Kelly on Groves.

"Mr Darby's reply to Mr A. N. Groves's letter never was published, as far as I know. It may exist in the hands of the Groves family. You can read a sufficient reply by a brother in the Bible Treasury for Nov." (The accompanying 'Remarks' is the reply alluded to.) "The grand defect is two-fold. 1<sup>st</sup> Mr Groves never felt what is due to Christ's glory if assailed. 2<sup>d</sup> He was wholly ignorant of the true relation and nature of God's Church. I make allowance for his ignorance of the appalling question which arose in 1847 (for he was not a prophet); but I doubt not he would have gone with Mr Newton in his previous effort to undermine divine principles by getting in independency & clericalism. Besides, Mr Groves was what Mr Newton was not, an essentially "loose" brother. He saw that grace was the power of gathering; he never believed that holiness, i.e. separation from evil, is and must be its principle, if of God. Now grace without holiness is no longer true grace, but licence of an amiable sort, and can only end in worse corruption than denominationalism of a morally respectable kind. This I regard as the gist of Mr Groves's letter, and in my judgment sure to become unchristian or even antichristian in practice. If "prophetic" of anything, it is of the leaven of Bethesdaism, into which he fell himself. ... Mr Groves never saw the truth as to the Church, and consequently diverged more and more from such as held it in power."

W. K.

## REMARKS ON A "PROPHETIC LETTER."

(Published in the "Christian," Sept. 23rd, 1887.)

The title arrests the attention. But on reading the letter we find it is not about prophecy, but about the divergence more than fifty years ago of Mr. A. N. Groves from Mr. Darby.

But the point for us is the subject and the spirit of this letter; and we find, underneath the profession of accepting and honouring all that is good, a real indifference to the great truth that forms the foundation of Christianity. This may not be apparent to a stranger's hasty glance; nevertheless it is painfully distinct to those who are acquainted with the circumstances that led to the Bethesda or O. B.

separation. And the causes of the separation and accompanying facts must be known to have an adequate judgment if not of this letter, certainly of the motive for calling it "prophetic" and of its reproduction.

In it there are not wanting expressions of love, "dear Darby," &c., and also a few sneers at the friends of Mr. D.: which are genuine? Or did the feelings alternate, while G. was writing the letter?

Its key-note is that not "light" but "life" is the ground of communion.\* There cannot be communion without life; but life *per se* is not the ground of communion. The Holy Spirit sent down after redemption acts in those who have the life of Christ and does indeed make all who possess it members one of another, and therefore is the "bond" between all who now believe. The ground of communion, of sitting together at the Lord's Table, is thus much more than the possession of life. Further, godliness of walk, and sound doctrine are assumed in scripture, above all, due honour to Christ—His divine glory, and the absolute purity of His humanity—not only the truth of this fixed in our souls, but complete separation from all who dishonour His Person, or who are indifferent to it. The writer of this letter was, and those who reprint it, are in the position of such indifference. This resolute stand for Christ is what Mr. G. deplored and witnessed against as an evil thing. In thus witnessing against (what he thinks) evil, is he not doing the thing he condemns?

On Christ's behalf to resist the devil is the first of Christian duties. But the real cause of separation among those who were together does not appear plainly in his letter; it is comparatively out of sight. At the close he speaks of possible reasons for separation, and that, if he witnessed against evil, he would separate from all, on his principles (and they are *his*, not God's) he would receive all! He never had faith in the holy gathering power of the Spirit to Christ; nor have his admirers. He mentions baptism in connection with Mr. D. But different views of baptism never separated Mr. D. from any christian; for it is well known that many, if not most, of those with whom he was in fellowship, differed from him on that point. What caused the separation of 1848-9 was of infinitely greater importance than any such question. The real cause of separation is ignored by those who can find any thing "prophetic" in so fundamentally shallow a letter, to say nothing of its more deplorable features.

Briefly, about forty years ago or more a blasphemous doctrine was taught concerning the person of Christ—that He was born as an outcast from God, i.e. born like others under darkness and curse, and at a distance from God, but that by holiness as well as by baptism! He had to win and did win His way into the favour of God (though elsewhere it was

\* It is striking that 1 John i. 7 decisively and in terms gives Mr. G. the lie: "If we walk in the light [which is what Mr. G. everywhere decries], we have fellowship one with another." The principles of the "prophetic letter" oppose not only the church but vital christianity.

taught to be only through His own death on the cross!).\* To attribute to Christ such a relationship before God is rightly styled blasphemy of the worst sort. At that time brethren generally condemned the doctrine, but some would not repudiate connexion with those gatherings where this evil doctrine was unjudged, on the misleading plea of receiving saints spite of their being in a sect. They would receive individuals that kept up intercommunion with those who taught or held the blasphemy. Notably Bethesda insisted on receiving a christian, no matter what his association might be, provided he himself professed personally not to accept the heterodoxy. Thus, such an one could return whence he came, and again come back forgetting the truth that *one* leprous stone defiles the house, and that the leprosy if not removed entails the destruction of the whole house. The glory of Christ's Person was thus openly made secondary to what was called brotherly love, in defiance of all we held from the beginning, excepting Mr. G., who of course ranged himself among such. Those with whom Mr. D. met abhorred this neutral ground, and refused fellowship with all who in the slightest way stood knowingly connected with it. Is it not striking that the letter is made to cover that monstrous high treason against Christ? It is really "prophetic" of the O. B. party.

All G.'s talk about life and accepting the good he sees in others, and not witnessing against evil, is nothing less than a plea for sin. It was bad enough to make light of ecclesiastical error in the establishment or dissent; it is far worse to justify those who, after dissociating themselves from human system, would form another and far more evil union, where Christ may be dishonoured, and His glory annulled in order to keep up a human idea of brotherhood with bigger numbers, and with more or less sanction of the denominations, or "churches," as G. regards them. For he never knew what God's church is.

Many expressions of desire for christian fellowship unshackled by peculiar doctrine, which seem to flow out from a heart enlarged by love to all saints, are found here at the expense of Christ's honour, and the glory of His Person. For the writer's party in the hour of trial failed to give Christ His true place (as indeed is the evil principle of this letter), and would receive in joint-fellowship those who do and those who do not regard it as of paramount importance. Now without it, as a fundamental confession, Christianity is nothing but a delusion. This immense truth—the divine glory and the sinless humanity of Christ's Person—is the *sine qua non* of God's glory in redemption. To this truth of Christ's Person the admirers of this letter have proved indifferent. It is a solemn thought, that indifference to it opens the door to that blasphemy which affirms that the Lord

Jesus was liable to loathsome disease and death like another! Of late years another of the same school published that the Lord at one period of His life here below was this, if not a leper!

The writer's principle pleads for indifference to those who hold evil, if they are supposed to have life. But if such wickedness is not to be witnessed against, is it not the vilest affront put on Christ, Who to this end was born, and for this cause came into the world that He should bear witness unto the truth? "And no lie is of the truth." Now if this be the character of the letter, it must equally apply to him who requested it to re-appear in the "Christian." One might perhaps say to him and others with him, "Ye did run well: who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" The truth is lost for neutrals. One might surely pass a severer sentence on such.

Let us give a moment to one or two statements, in this letter written by Mr. Groves in 1836, which is thought worthy to be again thrust before the eyes of professing Christians in 1887.

"You will be known more by what you witness *against* than what you witness *for*." Does the writer forget that truth is and must be now aggressive? That we have to maintain a spiritual warfare? That the christian is a soldier of Christ, and is called to put on the whole armour of God, one part of which is the *sword* of the Spirit? It is offensive, as well as defensive. That sort of christianity which excludes all antagonism to error, however dishonouring to the Lord, has a sweet ring to some ears, but it is the knell of death. There are cases (and this is one) where not to witness against antichrist is to witness for him. Neutrality begins with being neither cold nor hot: we know its judgment. But we are told that witnessing against evil is practically witnessing against all but ourselves. God forbid that the character of our testimony should differ from Christ's! Christ is ignored, Who was the True Light, no less than Life. The antagonism is false. The word of God says, "Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." In the evil day (as it is now) we have to "withstand" as well as to "stand." Neutrality can do neither; it is in itself a fallen thing.

Take the following, "As far as I know what those principles were in which I gloried on first discovering them in the word of God, I now glory in them ten times more, since I have experienced their applicability to all the various and perplexing circumstances of the present state of the church; allowing you to give every individual, and collection of individuals, the standing God gives them without identifying yourself with any of their evils." This is a long sentence, and contains a serious avowal that the truth is not gloried in for its own sake so much as for its principles being applicable to every place of religious profession, and that he can so give not only to individuals, but to companies, the standing that God gives. Is not this to say that the various forms of religious association have a standing from God?

\* It is well to say that what the author confessed or withdrew we never allege against him. It is false that he ever gave up more than the Adamic headship in Rom. v. involving Christ. The rest he reserved, and no doubt still holds. We are bound to treat him as guilty of all he has not renounced.

They were "churches" to Mr. G.; they are not to God's word. He levels God's standard of the church down to the errant will of man. Nor need we wonder; for he can hear the church's Lord blasphemed, and yet not witness against it! Separation from evil is the only true witness against it; and what evil is so abhorrent to the Spirit of God as that which dishonours or makes light of Christ's Person?

I wonder the "endorser" did not omit the following; yet it may be well as shewing how some minds are caught by mere sound: "The common life or common blood of the family of God (for the life is in the blood)." What think you of the "common blood" of the family of God? and of the attempt to justify this strangely unscriptural expression by the still stranger quotation, "For the life is in the blood," from Leviticus?

We are prophetically told that the "little bodies" no longer stand forth the witnesses for the glorious and simple truth, so much as against all we judge error, and that this is to lower us from heaven to earth! Be the bodies little or big, is it lowering the testimony from heaven to earth to contend earnestly for the glory of Christ's Person and to separate from those who do not so contend? It is a natural conclusion that he who requested the insertion of this letter in the "Christian" is as indifferent to it as Mr. G. or the loose principles of his "prophetic letter."

Again, "dear Darby" is told that some "little flocks" are fast tending to the position where the most narrow-minded and bigoted will rule, and he (J. N. D.) is charged with making *light*, not *life*, the measure of communion. That is, we are now so charged. This is false. But if requiring that all admitted into fellowship from companies that tamper with antichrist should abjure this blasphemy against Christ, if this be the *light* the writer means, we do make it a test in accordance with 2 John.

Liberty of conscience is demanded—liberty for what? To this end Rom. xiv. 3 is quoted. Liberty of conscience as to eating or not eating is of God. But only think of compromising the truth as to Christ's Person (the real motive for reproducing this letter) down to the level of eating or not eating herbs! Is it not a perversion of scripture?

Latitudinarianism, indifference, disobedience, or by whatever other name the various forms of Mr. G.'s evil principle may be known, comes out boldly in printed capitals, "I would INFINITELY RATHER BEAR WITH ALL THEIR EVILS THAN SEPARATE FROM THEIR GOOD." Bearing with evil and not witnessing against it by separation from it is fellowship with it and simply unholiness. Is this the position of him who by requesting the republication of this letter makes it his own? The Word says, "Cease to do evil, learn to do well." We are not told to bear with such evil, but to be separate in every way (2 Cor. vi.).

It is said we have a "Shibboleth" as well as those from whom we separate. The one who now stands in the place of the writer says he has none. Yet he

is mistaken; for the Shibboleth of neutrality is the denial of the divine test of 2 John. He and his are in the position of Israel when every man did that which was right in his own eyes. To this he would reduce the church of God, and call it communion in life. To "light" he does not pretend. He talks of uniformity and deprecates it, except what he calls "perfect spiritual uniformity" which amounts to this—"You may think as you please about this or that fundamental truth; only let us unite—and this is perfect SPIRITUAL UNIFORMITY!" To me it is the perfect abandonment of spirituality and of true unity in principle.

Unity, if not "uniformity," is required by God. There is a test given to us of God; and by His grace all among us pronounce it. Underneath it is this principle, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father.

The separation which has existed for nearly forty years unto this present day is that those who are represented by Mr. G. do not honour the Son even as they honour the Father. They are in ecclesiastical fellowship with evil; the house of which they form part has a leprous stone in its walls. It may have been scraped again and again during the last forty years; still it is leprous. Will the leprous house ever be taken down and cast into an unclean place?

This letter as a whole I regard as an ungodly pleading for the allowance of sin in the assembly. It is a denial of corporate holiness. For in a company where the glory of Christ is touched, or where His dishonour is not absolutely refused, there is corporate unholiness. No doubt when the letter first appeared, it was exposed; but the revival of the letter demands some fresh notice, even if feeble.

R. B.

Oct. 11, 1887.

P.S. It may be added that Mr. G. was known to hold principles "entirely at variance" with Brethren's. What could one expect from a person who failed to see the difference between "the kingdom of heaven" and "the church"? He consequently misused the parable of the wheat-and-tare field to oppose the godly separateness of the saints. Like Papists, &c., he applied to the church what our Lord said of the world. For the field is the world, not the church; and in the world there can be no righteous separation till judgment. Was it intentionally to be so in the church of God?

JUST PUBLISHED, by W. KELLY.

The Doctrine of Christ, a new edition, 1d.  
Purchase and Redemption, 2d.  
The Action of the Holy Spirit in the Assembly, 4d.,  
The Unity of the Spirit, or, Denominationalism, 3d.,  
The Lord's Prayer, 2d.,  
The Christian Calling and Hope, 2d.,  
The Prospects of the World, 2d.,  
Worship in the Hour that now is, 2d.,  
Christ Tempted and Sympathising, 3d.

W. Walters, Printer and Publisher, 53, Paternoster Row, London. E.C.

## Letters to the Editor.

### "A PROPHETIC LETTER."

DEAR SIR,—As a believer who, though united in outward communion with those who are somewhat invidiously called "Exclusive Brethren," yet am one in heart and spirit and affection with all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth, will you allow me to say a few words in reference to the letter you published in a recent issue from Mr. Groves to Mr. Darby, dated 1836.

You very justly entitle it "A Prophetic Letter." The question naturally arises, What is it prophetic of? Probably I am not transgressing the bounds of charity if I assume that you consider it to be a foreshadowing of that apparently isolated position which the "Brethren" are now found occupying. This is what was in Mr. Groves's mind when he wrote the letter, and many, doubtless, will agree with both him and you.

There is another side to it, however, of which I should like to remind your readers, and in doing so I am only going over a similar line to that which I notice is constantly taken in your journal, though not perhaps with the same object in view. I take it that Mr. Groves's letter is strikingly prophetic of the state of things which has forced this company of earnest and godly Christians who, if they have erred at all, have only erred on the side of an over-sensitiveness and jealousy as to the truth of God and the honour of Christ, into a path of separation from the modern developments of Christendom.

I will not myself attempt to describe what is going on around. I refer your readers to the testimony rendered by your own journal, and by others, like *Word and Work* and *The Sword and Trowel*, and by every faithful minister of the Lord Jesus Christ in these days. We who have been, as we believe, led by the Spirit of God into a separate place have to contemplate to-day the striking spectacle of many of the Lord's servants, who in former times have ridiculed our protests and characterised us as croakers and evil prophets, now brought face to face themselves, and engaged in a deadly struggle—and a hopeless struggle, too—with the very things of which we were led to see the beginnings, and to speak vigorously of them, many a long year ago. The seeds of worldliness, looseness of doctrine, and indifference to the claims of Christ, which were being sown in Christendom in the earlier days of "the Brethren," are now bringing forth a plentiful harvest; and it does not require a great amount of perception to see that faithful Christians who are still identified with the various denominations are at their very wits' end to know how to tolerate what is passing under their eyes continually. They would fain alter or stop these things, if they could, but their helplessness is only too manifest.

It is all very well to say, as Mr. Groves does, that we are not responsible for what goes on in the Church of God. In one sense, perhaps that may be true; but that is not the question. Paul was not responsible for the deadness and hypocrisy of Judaism; Wycliffe and Luther were not responsible for the errors of Rome; Whitfield and Wesley were not responsible for the apathy and worldliness of the Anglican Church. But each of these devoted servants of Christ, and thousands of others not so well known, were compelled, sooner or later, by the very force of circumstances, into taking an outside place. Where would have been the glorious unfoldings of Christianity in the Pauline Epistles, where the dawning of the light of truth and liberty in the Reformation, where the wonderful revival of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, if Paul, and Wycliffe, and Luther, and Whitfield, and Wesley, and all the other noble men and women who are identified with them, had persisted in remaining within the communions where they were born and bred, and in associating in life and service with those still linked up with those communions? Were they not all striking examples of the truth of that word in 2 Timothy: "If a man therefore purge himself from these

(i.e., the vessels unto dishonour) he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work"?

I do not want to trespass further on your space, or to enter into questions which have been argued times without number. I only seek to take the occasion of the reprint of this letter of Mr. Groves, to emphasise to your readers the circumstances which have placed us where we are.

I should just like to add that there is probably not one amongst us, who knows anything of the present state of Christendom, who does not look out over the great sea of difficulty and perplexity which spreads itself before us, without the deepest yearnings and longings of heart towards those dear saints of God who are still imagining that they can do what no one has ever done yet, that is, to stem the great tide of evil by remaining associated with it.

Such a course can only lead to loss and damage to one's own spiritual life, and a gradual failure and weakening of one's testimony for Christ. It was tried in very early times by one of whom it is said that "he vexed his righteous soul from day to day" with the unlawful deeds of those around him; but, with all his vexing, both he himself and his testimony ended in a dismal failure. "He seemed as one that mocked" when he told of the coming judgment. How much better to have been in the place of *faith* and *power* with Abraham, who, though he never sat, as a great man and a judge in this world's affairs, at the gate of a city, as Lot did, yet occupied the infinitely more preferable, if more quiet and out-of-sight, position of the "Friend of God"!—Believe me, yours in Christ,

ADELPHOS.

[If no one else should reply to this dear brother's letter, we shall be constrained to do so ourselves. He has set a good example in adopting a self-restrained and courteous tone, which we hope will be maintained by any other correspondent. At present we only ask, Can "Adelphos" be right in implying that all other Christians are vessels of wood and earth—Lots vexing their righteous souls among men of Sodom—and that he and other *adelphoi* are vessels of gold and silver because they purge themselves from these; that is to say, from vessels of wood and earth, from Lots, such as George Müller? To few men is given so long a life of active service; and few have lived so useful and so blameless a life. Yet George Müller stands only second on the list of those whom these zealous but mistaken brethren excommunicate. Surely such an application of this Scripture is not according to truth and love.—Ed.]

DEAR SIR,—It will be acknowledged by most of your readers that the interesting letter from Mr. A. N. Groves to Mr. J. N. Darby, which you have so justly styled "prophetic," has been abundantly justified by the course of events, and that the contentions of Mr. Groves are only confirmed by the letter of "Adelphos," in your issue of October 7. The latter writer expresses himself as if all the churches of Christendom were in their death throes, a few saints only remaining within them, vainly endeavouring to stem the tide of evil by which their overthrow is threatened. Surely, this is an utterly distorted picture, the conception of a mind so habituated to see the evil in other systems as to be blind to the good. Never before has the Christian Church generally been so marked by spiritual life and earnest zeal as it is to-day. True, the forces arrayed against it are as rampant as ever, and there are dissensions and errors enough within its borders, but there is probably more evangelistic earnestness, more sympathy with the wants of the people, more self-denial in the churches, of this country at least, than ever before in their history.

The endeavour to correct the evils of ecclesiastical systems by separation from them has failed *ipso facto*. In testifying against the sects, the Brethren have unwittingly formed a new and a very narrow sect, which again has become divided into several sub-sects. Human authority has been professedly done away with, but the strong and the masterful have inevitably, though not in name, re-established it. Again: it is well, no doubt, that

adult Christians, in obedience to the dictates of conscience, should, if necessary, attach themselves to this body, but what of those who are brought up in it from childhood? With them there is no struggle of conscience involved. They naturally subscribe to the views of their seniors, and as these accentuate the evils in other churches, and regard their own as God's peculiar Zion, a censorious attitude is encouraged in the young, which cannot be conducive to their growth in grace.

In fact, the habit of the Brethren of regarding their own standard of doctrine and worship as alone perfection is only too apt to develop into a tendency to establish the same standard in regard to personal sanctity. They not only forget the pregnant words of Jesus, in Luke ix. 50, but they are apt also to overlook these, Matt. vii. 1, and in doing so they deprive themselves of that immense source of power which lies in the generous recognition of qualities which others may possess, though in latent form, and, perhaps, only half known even to themselves. This great principle, which is a notable secret of all success in influencing our fellow-creatures for good, has no place of operation where the separation of one believer from another on the ground of superiority in doctrinal purity or holiness, is emphasised. By separation and exclusion they have abandoned the place of power, exalting the differences that divide, instead of the agreements and sympathies which should unite them with other Christians.

The instances of Luther, Wycliffe, Wesley, and others, are hardly appropriate analogies. Each of these appeared at a great crisis, when some grand fundamental saving truth was at stake. Separation from the degenerate order was in the circumstances inevitable. Nor do we doubt that many earnest Brethren have at some period of their lives been compelled by circumstances to seek spiritual refreshment outside the existing order. But an essentially temporary separation need not be elevated into an eternal necessity, nor, if it must continue, need it alienate from sympathy with other bodies of professing Christians. The instances of William Wilberforce, Lord Teignmouth, and many others, might be cited to show the enormous influence over the general standard of religious life which may be exercised by those who, while disapproving and holding aloof from many human errors and frailties in the Church, yet retain unimpaired their sympathy with it, and their desire not merely to *protest against*, but to *purify and edify* it.—Faithfully yours,

OBSERVER.

"A PROPHETIC LETTER."

DEAR SIR,—The question implied by the re-publication of Mr. A. Groves's letter is: Have the predictions therein contained been fulfilled? Though admitting that question, "Adelphos" really ignores it, and maintains that the letter is "strikingly prophetic of the state of things which has forced this company of earnest and godly Christians...into a path of separation from the modern developments of Christendom." As a fact, Mr. Groves's well-known letter is almost entirely confined to the consideration of tendencies working in the midst of the undivided company of Brethren fifty years ago.

None will dispute that "what is going on around" is extremely sad. "A great tide of evil"—"a great sea of difficulty and perplexity" it is indeed. But in this present controversy, to dwell upon that is to be altogether away from the point. Does Adelphos wish his readers to understand that those who have escaped from that sea of difficulty—that tide of evil—to the "Exclusive Brethren," have really found a haven of rest for their souls?

One feels constrained to deny, in passing, the parallel sought to be instituted between the attitude of St. Paul towards Judaism with "its deadness and hypocrisy," and the attitude of Brethren towards the prevailing systems. Had Judaism in Apostolic days been never so living and pure, St. Paul could not have remained in it. But in the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is not the corruptions of Judaism that are dwelt upon, but the fact that it was "old and ready to vanish away." It was "a shadow" and had served its turn. The same want of discernment (I would say in all kindness) spoils Adelphos's other historical parallels.

Still more emphatically must we deny that any ecclesiastical position, no matter how closely it may conform to God's Word, will of itself constitute the man who holds it a "Friend of God." Lot was not another Abraham when he journeyed with the "Friend of God"; his heart was in the pleasant plains. That title and blessing can only result from personal holiness and walk with God.

But to come more closely to my point: Have the predictions been fulfilled? As "Allos Adelphos," I must sadly admit that much has been strikingly fulfilled. Will "Adelphos" deny it? Can he be ignorant that the "sea of difficulty" and the "tide of evil" have flowed in upon even the Exclusives? Sir, it would be an easy, but saddening, task to put together a catena of quotations from printed and published documents, which would show what a path of trial and difficulty is trodden by the feet of those who form this "earnest and godly" body of Christians, or (to adopt your correspondent's metaphor) what a tempestuous sea has tossed them of late. Our divisions are notorious, and have made us a by-word and a reproach. Within the past few years every "gathering" has been shaken and disturbed or rent asunder by strifes and divisions! None can conceive anything more melancholy than much of the recent Brethrenistic literature—charges hurled from side to side, of heresy, schism, and sectarianism, together with high-handed "cutting-off" of individuals and gatherings, or wholesale secession and separation.

Perhaps I may be allowed to quote from one or two papers issued within recent years. One who stands high for his gifts and piety writes:—"That the hand of God is upon us is but too evident. Our shame is public. It requires no spirituality to see that exactly in that which we have professedly sought we have failed most signally. The unity of the spirit in the bond of peace is just, most surely, what we have not kept...It is not possible to escape the reproach which God has permitted to be against us all—the reproach not of here and there some local divisions, but of division from end to end; and not where separation from manifest evil has been a Divine necessity, but upon points of ecclesiastical discipline, or of doctrine confessedly in no wise

fundamental—too minute, in fact, to be made a ground of division by the narrowest and most sectarian of sects around us! Yet we all disclaim as injurious the accusation of being sects" (F. W. Grant).

Another, Lord A. P. Cecil, writing upon the occasion of the publication of a book which might well make us blush ("The Brethren: their Origin, Progress, and Testimony," A. Miller), said:—"At the very moment when we are calling ourselves 'The Brethren,' and speaking of our origin, progress, and testimony, the Lord is shaking us to our very centre. (This was written while the "'81 division" was impending.) I am afraid that many of us have no higher thought, corporately, than that we belong to the Brethren, who began fifty years ago...a wretched, sectarian thought."

Another, writing during the "'85 division" (alas! alas! that they need to be so described), says:—"Our pride, our worldliness, our arrogance, are being dealt with by the living God, who loves us too well to allow the general and individual state of his beloved saints to pass unchecked." (W. Scott.)

But of still greater interest is the last I will cite, Mr. J. N. Darby himself. Without doubt, Adelphos has heard of "Cluffism," and of the New Lump movement, which really led to the division of '81. Those who adopted New Lump views believed that the whole company of Brethren was "leavened," and that nothing remained but to "separate" and become a new lump. Others regarded themselves as Philadelphia in the midst of a Brethrenistic Laodicea. As to "Cluffism," Mr. Darby strongly defined it as "a principle of extra excellence...which professed, and still [about 1880—81] holds its ground...Its origin was a filthy mysticism, not unfolded to all. Yet these views prevailed to so great an extent that the author of the article "Plymouth Brethren," in Schaff's "Religious Encyclopædia" sets the Cluffites in a party by themselves, as forming one of the three sections into which "the (Exclusive) Brethren," have resolved themselves ("Rel. Enc." iii. p. 1858). In the paper from which I quote ("New Lump," published by Morrish) Mr. Darby refers to the "low state of things" which existed among Brethren, and the remedies which had been proposed: "the first, some 'silly women' plan of a new lump, clean contrary to the whole sense of the passage; secondly, conscience justly at work, but faith failing as to trusting Christ's faithfulness in taking care of his, and his testimony; and thirdly, Cluffism, full of pretension and want of self-knowledge; though I fully admit, several dear people got among them, misled by its promises of more spirituality." All that, at least, does not look like the rosy picture of the "the Brethren" suggested rather than drawn by Adelphos.

But there is more. So "low" had the condition of Brethren become, that Mr. Darby himself thought of separating from them, as others had done. In the same paper he says: "Many thought of leaving Brethren. I had been in the deepest degree exercised by the very question. I agreed with them as to their judgment of the evil. But I did not think desertion was the remedy; it did not remedy the evil—satisfied, perhaps, the individual conscience, but left the saints to their fate. I not only felt the evil was not remedied, but could not be, humanly speaking. It was not my place to flee as a hireling. I was accounted an unfaithful person by those disposed to leave." That is, to adopt Adelphos's illustration, Mr. Darby was considered by these ardent brethren as another Lot, vexing his righteous soul in the Sodom of the "exclusive" communion.

That paper was written no great while before Mr. Darby's death. Since then another division has become an accomplished fact. "The narrower minds" which had "encircled" Mr. Darby with their bands, had no hand to keep them in check after his departure; they had their swing and sway, and the Exclusive Brethren have, beyond all question, adopted a test, different indeed from that of the Walkerites and Glassites (as Mr. Groves put it), "but as real."

"Whenever Christ has received a person," wrote Mr. Darby, three years after the date of

Mr. Groves's letter, "we would receive him. . . . We receive all that the Lord has received, all who have fled as poor sinners for refuge to the hope set before them. . . I repeat then, that we receive all who are on the foundation, and reject and put away all error by the Word of God and the help of His ever-blessed, ever-living Spirit." Those were the confessed principles of 1839. Will any so-called "Exclusive" Brother venture to assert that they are the basis of communion in this year 1887?—Faithfully yours,

ALLOS ADELPHOS.

Not fully quoted. See p. 210. "New Lump."

Mr. Stanley says—

I will accept any name we find in scripture—brethren, believers, saints, &c., only in the sense that these names embrace all believers on earth. As we are not a sect, but have left all sects, gathered as at the beginning, in the name of the Lord Jesus; in this sense, then, I will use the word "brethren." I use this scriptural name, then, not as the name of a sect, but because we are not one. I am, moreover, sure the work is of God, however we, as ever, have failed.