

## *Appendix 5:* *B.W.Newton and H.Borlase*

We know that:

...in... 1834... four [brothers, believers], J.L.Harris, B.W.Newton, H.Borlase, and T.Dowglass, arranged a meeting in Plymouth, to which many Christian ministers were invited, as well as others, and many attended. From notes taken at the meeting, the following answers were prepared by B.W.Newton and H.Borlase.

Having set out the original state of the *ekklēsia*, Newton and Borlase went on:

The church did not long continue in [its original] state: it needs only [that is, it is only necessary] to compare its present condition with its character and order as [set out in Scripture], to show that now it does not agree with it in one single particular: ‘While men slept the enemy sowed the tares’. Many, it may be, will argue *a priori* against the standing fact of the apostasy, which actually took place, as though the promise of Christ: ‘Lo, I am with you always’, must in this case have failed; but the declension is not only prophesied of in the apostolic letters, but all the seeds of the future evil are clearly disclosed in them. And these, like so many tributary streams, found their way into one mighty current, and gradually bore the church away from the position in which it was originally placed. The history of the three first centuries is an illustration of this. We see in this history how the mischiefs which had begun in the very days of the apostles – divisions, heresies, Judaising, philosophy, and vain deceit; self-exaltation, false teaching, holding the truth in licentiousness, and the absurd wanderings of the human intellect – all rapidly grew up. But worldly glory was the last of all. The church had been corrupted within; the foundation had been undermined: her union in the resurrection of Christ was forgotten; and when the barriers with which God had surrounded her were subverted, the world found an easy entrance. What was the apostasy of the Jews [in the days of the old covenant]? It was this: ‘They were mingled among the heathen, and learned their

works'. The church did the same thing; and this is the essence of its apostasy, the true secret of its fall; for apostasy is departure from the standard laid down by God in principle and practice.

We may remark that as soon as the Spirit ceased to be amongst them, giving real moral power, that men began to claim OFFICIAL authority from the ordination of men. The period of Constantine, perhaps, may be fixed on as the consummation of the church's fall; for... first it became possessed of legalised power, and professedly ceased to be distinctively separate from the world. The apostasy was finally brought into a systematic form in popery...

There are however three features which should be noticed, pre-eminently distinguishable in popery; but which, wherever found, are sure signs of apostasy:

I. The world is identified with the church.

II. The constitution, rites, *etc.* of the... church, which is [that is, that which it was originally – DG] elected and spiritual, is [now – DG] founded on the model of the ancient Jewish system, which was national and outward.

III. Official appointment or ordination is considered to bestow authority, although every spiritual and moral qualification be wanting.

These three evil features are found as decidedly in modern national [Church] systems, as [they are] in the Church of Rome... With respect to the second point, sufficient has been said; only it may be observed that all national [Church] systems have been based upon the *supposed* resemblance between the Christian and Jewish systems, which however are so totally dissimilar, that the principle of the old covenant<sup>1</sup> becomes apostasy in [that is, if it is inserted into] this [that is, the new covenant]. The Jewish system was intended to be of this world. [I think this means either that the old covenant was an external covenant, or it is a reference to the institution devised by the Fathers – that this institution is Jewish]. At the Reformation the principles of individual salvation were recovered; but the Reformation did not take the systems out of the world, but left them where they were before. And this point is of infinite importance. The true view of our present state depends upon it.

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<sup>1</sup> Originally 'last dispensation'.

There was then no gathering of God's children together out of the world. The world was still allowed to clothe itself with the garments of the church.

But to come more immediately to our present state.

In what follows, the writers speak of 'National establishments' or 'National churches'. I take this to mean more than The Church of England, for example; I have replaced 'National' with 'Christendom':

Christendom-establishments are not, like the early churches, united on the ground of belonging to Christ rejected, and risen out of the world because he was disowned by it: but their very principle is to receive the world, and call it by the name of Christ.

Christendom-establishments... do not, like the early churches, 'assemble themselves together', but they assemble with the world...

Christendom-churches receive [those forbidden in Scripture], even at the table of the Lord, to partake of the ONE bread.

They altogether hinder the free course of the Spirit. In the early churches all, whom the Spirit had qualified, were allowed to speak, 'one by one, that all might learn, and all might be comforted' (1 Cor. 14:31). In Christendom-churches none are allowed to speak except one, who professes to have the full authority of the Holy Spirit, though he may have been appointed only by man, and have no spiritual or even moral qualification whatsoever. What would an apostle say to these things? Everything which he had forbidden, would be found to be done; and everything which he had commanded, would be found undone. What is apostasy, except departure in principle and practice from the directions of God?...

The church has forgotten that its only hope is in the resurrection; and as a natural consequence, is looking for rest upon the earth... The church has lost her power and her unity...

The Holy Spirit has not left the church: he has been grieved, but he has not departed; otherwise there would be no church at all. The promise still remains: 'Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them', and the blessing of his presence will be known just in proportion as it is looked for and depended on. It is still possible to meet together and follow his commandments to the very letter: and although those gifts may be withdrawn which

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formerly made the church a wonder to the world, yet facts sufficiently show that the gifts of teaching and of speaking to exhortation and comfort, with many others, are still continued in... measure; and it is these which the 'poor of the flock' esteem most precious, as contributing to their growth and instruction in righteousness...

If when the gospel was first preached, a heathen had sought to know what Christianity practically was, he would have found a faithful exhibition of its character in the churches at Antioch or Jerusalem. But the position which was formerly occupied by them is now occupied by the nations of Christendom. From them the heathen have to learn what Christianity practically is... Under the figure of the olive-branch (Rom. 11) and the vine, whose clusters are to be cast into the winepress of wrath, God has recognised the nations as standing in this responsible position. He has also foretold what the end will be; and facts sufficiently show how fearfully the present state of the professing Gentile body agrees with the predicted end... Apostasy can alone account for the present position of the Gentile remnant – united with aliens and separated from one another. Obedience to the word and unanimity in following out its requirements, might yet bring us into a position where we should cease to offend... [and] that it is still possible, even in weakness, to keep 'the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace', assuming no [human] authority, but looking only to the Holy Spirit to provide what is needed, according as the time requires.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> B.W.Newton and H.Borlase: *Answers to the Questions considered at a meeting held in Plymouth, on September 15 1834, and the following days; chiefly compiled from notes taken at the meeting*, second edition, Plymouth 1847, emphasis original.