

Correspondence

**From : Mr. Greg Fields,
17 Fairborn Court
Hamilton OHIO**

Dear Mr. Horne,

Greetings, Sir, in our GREAT LORD. Sir, please enter a subscription for me to your excellent (!) journal beginning with Issue No.10. Enclosed is \$12 if this is acceptable per exchange rate for British Sterling.

Sir, I'm a disabled American veteran of the U.S. Air Force and very isolated in my love for the Reformed Faith here in S.W. Ohio. There are only a handful of us who stand against "free offer" crypto-Arminian evangelism and I highly commend you sir for your firm stand. A friend lent me issue No. 9 of the BRJ and I was overjoyed to read your superb work.

Sir, may I request any back issues of the BRJ or any other related material that could help this poor, feeble saint in his lonely pilgrimage? Thank you sir! Please pray for me sir as I am in a particularly vexing situation as I covenant to pray for your VITAL work.

Thank you again sir for your kindly consideration of this matter. "The bowels of the Saints are refreshed by thee, brother."...Philemon 7b.

SINCERELY in the LORD CHRIST,

Greg Fields

SOLI DEO GLORIA

(All emphasis above original. Contact made via Tony Horne. Ed.)

**From : Mr. Colin James
Downend, BRISTOL**

The Editor, BRJ.

Dear Mr. Williams,

I write as one who has read with profit many of the articles in the BRJ [and the earlier Presbyterian] but now feel I must question the desirability of the controversial approach taken in the BRF News Alert, and to a lesser extent in the BRJ.

Controversy when the fundamentals of the faith are at stake is often essential, but, where more difficult issues are involved, should one not be careful to enter such with caution.

It appears that most of those attacked in the

News Alert and the BRJ are genuine believers. In fact many would probably agree with one of the Puritans, that "It is God's free grace that predestines us to eternal life, that converts sinners, that sets free our wills, that enables us to persevere to final salvation, so that anything we do to attain to glory is wholly given us of God by his special grace and glory, and, on the other side, we hold that whatever pertains to the corruption of our nature, to our obstinacy in sin, to the slavery of the will, and whatever draws us to damnation and brings us to hell, we impute to ourselves."

It is when we go beyond such statements that differences appear- in fact, when we go beyond what the Scriptures state on such matters as God's Sovereignty and man's responsibility; Election and Reprobation; the origin of sin; preaching the gospel and man's inability. There are mysteries here that we cannot fathom; our human logic fails. We might learn from Augustine, who, asked on one occasion some difficult questions, replied "I had rather admit cautious ignorance, than profess false knowledge".

But, I may say, "I think I do have the truth on these matters and I must make it known." Before I do, I must ask myself if I really have all the truth on my side, and, if so, how shall I convince others, and how profitable will the controversy caused be? I have to remind myself that here on earth "I see through a glass darkly", so I need to study both sides of the argument in the light of Scripture and in a spirit of humility, asking the Spirit of truth to enlighten me from the Word. I must be careful, too, to try to understand what my opponent is saying, so as not to misrepresent his views or draw inferences which he does not draw.

How much I need the spirit of love, characterised in 1 Cor. 13, so that I may put the most favourable construction possible on the words of those from whom I differ, otherwise they are likely to be provoked, and hardened in the position they hold. Perhaps failure here is why so few who engage in controversy ever change their minds as a result of arguments put forward. Thomas Manton is surely right when he says "When tongue is

sharpened against tongue, and pen against pen, what follows? Nothing but mutual animosity and hatred, whereby if we gain aught of truth, we lose much of love and goodness. Those engage most successfully who use the hardest arguments and the softest words".

All truth, if it is to be profitable must have a practical aim, e.g. in scripture the Trinity is never treated as a speculative doctrine, but as to how each Person of the Godhead relates to the believer in blessings and privileges. So any truth we contend for, should be argued in such a manner that those who read may be built up in the faith, enabled better to live a life of obedience, service and self-denial. How sad it would be if my views on certain doctrines should be argued in such a way as to hinder progress in Christian obedience.

Is there not a danger, too, that I shall 'fiddle while Rome burns, that I shall spend so much time discussing e.g. whether the gospel is an "offer" or not, that I have little time to make known to sinners, that there is a God who hates sin, but that pardon is found in Jesus Christ, a complete Saviour? Or, as one of the Puritans laments, of the sadness of "the noise and heat of controversies, that scarcely leave leisure to hear or think of the fundamental and saving doctrines of the scriptures, and not at all to do those deeds required by God's commandments."

One final point, of less importance. My education did not prepare me for such words as "obfuscation" and "miasma". I am much happier with the plain Anglo-Saxon of J.C. Ryle, and would be happy too, to have the kind of writing found in his "Practical Religion" forming a more prominent part in the BRJ. As Ryle says, it treats of "the daily duties, dangers, experience and privileges of all who profess and call themselves true Christians" That surely is a worthy aim.

Yours sincerely
Colin James.

Editor's response :

"Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets." Luke 6 : 26. This is one prophecy of the Word of God that certainly does not apply to the BRJ and the BRF! May it never apply!

First, may I respectfully recommend to Mr. James that he obtain a copy of a good

English dictionary, like Chambers 20th Century, this would rectify any difficulties he encounters with the BRJ vocabulary, with little expenditure of money, time, or effort. I am a little mystified though, as to why he finds difficulties with "obfuscation" and "miasma", two words which appear at about, I should say, school 5th form level, while he makes no complaint about the French, Greek, and Hebrew words which have appeared in our journal.

But we consider it no part of our business to imitate Bishop Ryle, who tended to be rather accommodating of Arminians and Amyraldians, whatever else of worth he may have done.

Now, about the "controversial approach" we take. I would advise Mr. James to read the New Testament and the Reformers, their full-power controversialism leaves the BRJ way behind! **"Preach the Word"** says Paul [2 Tim.4 : 2] "be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine." **"contend earnestly for the faith"** [Jude 3]. And when we see the faith being undermined even in the house of its friends, are we to be mute? As watchmen on the walls of Zion, does Mr. James wish us to trade in our trumpets for tin whistles?

And what of those "attacked" in our journal, was not our "attack" a defence of our faith against what was in one distinct case, insult, abuse, and outright untruths? Has Mr. James written to the "other parties" in these matters to make his views known to them? **If he has not**, well then the "cat is out of the bag", so to speak, and it looks as if he is really just speaking for our opponents, exhorting us to be mute while they unjustly assault us!

I challenge him to write to me again, specifying issue and page numbers in the BRJ to show just **where** and **how** we "go beyond what the Scriptures state on such matters as God's Sovereignty, and man's responsibility; Election and Reprobation; etc." Fact is, our sticking close to Scripture and the Reformers is causing our opponents no small distress!

Also, I challenge him to point out to us **WHERE** we have not taken the trouble to find out and "understand what my opponent is saying" before making our criticisms. We spend a good deal of time on this, for the sake of God's truth and His Glory.

As to "all truth, if it is to be profitable musthave a practical aim" I am sure he is

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is such cases is no less evidently declared...to **put from amongst** them (!!!) such obstinate offenders..... Hereunto also are subservient all the commands that are given them to exhort and admonish one another (cf. Heb. 10 : 24-29 and 12 : 22f and 13 : 7-17), that the **whole Church** may be preserved in purity, **order**, holiness, and faithfulness....

“With whom rests the principal care and **power** — according to the mind of Christ — to see the **discipline** of the Church in particular congregations exercised, and to exercise it accordingly ? If this should be found to be in the Ministers (plural) and, through their neglect in the administration of it, offenders be left in their sins and impenitency without a due application of the means for their healing and recovery; if **the Church itself** come to be corrupted thereby, and to fall under the displeasure of Jesus Christ — as these things in one degree or other, more or less, will ensure on that neglect — it will not turn unto their comfortable account at the great day. That this is their **duty**, that this **authority** and **inspection** is **committed** unto them, the reasons before **insisted** on....do undeniably evince.”

Further, in XVI : 154 and XVI : 169 Owen adds : “All lawful societies constituting such by voluntary **confederation** according unto peculiar laws and rules of their own choice unto especial duties and ends, have a right and power by the light of nature to receive into their society those that are willing and meet — engaging themselves to observe the rules, laws and ends of the society and to expel them out of it who wilfully deviate from those rules.... Wherefore, when our Lord Jesus Christ gives unto his **Church** the **power of binding and loosing** — directing **them** in the exercise of that power — He directs them to ask assistance by prayer when they are **gathered** together, Matt. 18 : 18-20.

To be continued. (DV).

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perfectly right, and equally sure from my own and other's experience that the truths expressed in the BRJ *do have a practical aim through and through*, in that our aim is to draw people back to the pure Scripture truths, and to divest themselves of all the fleshly egocentric acoutrements of sinful mankind....and to live by God's Word alone.

We do not “fiddle, while Rome burns”. Many of our members and our preachers spend enormous time, trouble, and effort, in the work of the Gospel, and thanks be to God, with His blessing evident upon it unworthy though we are! And in all this we find how supremely practical our researches concerning the Gospel “offer” have been, in that we are able to preach with the certain note of the Old Gospel, of the Apostles and

the Reformers, unadulterated with the poison of Arminianized non-gospels.

May God deliver us from all fear of controversy. When even in the House of the Reformed compromisers work to mix God's priceless truth with an Arminianized “mess of pottage”, shall we be silent, shall we be nice, and “loving” [Is it loving to be silent when God's Truth is being seriously adulterated ?] Shall we become like those who “have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying Peace, peace; when there is no peace” [Jer. 6 : 14] ?

Imperfect watchmen we may be, but by God's grace we will not be silent watchmen. Mr. James, out of his Christian concern wrote us this letter, will he not out of the same concern join us in this battle?