

# CORRESPONDENCE

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*To the Saints Gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ:*

BELOVED BRETHREN: We desire to address you upon a matter, which, while the act referred to occurred a number of years ago, still has a bearing upon our relations here in practical fellowship.

In the division at Montreal, in 1884, it will be remembered that Mr. F. W. Grant, a brother beloved by you as well as ourselves, and, a well-known and faithful servant of the Lord, was judged by the majority of the assembly to be a person—for his doctrines, or for the manner in which he maintained them—unfit to have a place with us at the Table of the Lord. A large minority in the meeting dissented from this action, protesting earnestly against it as they had against what led up to it. On the following Lord's day, after he had been put away, you will remember this minority met at Craig Street and continued the breaking of the bread without any interval. It is of this that we wish particularly to speak.

Without going into details, we believe that in thus beginning a fresh assembly in separation from their brethren meeting at N. P. II. a new issue was raised, which was calculated to disturb the minds of many. We therefore believe that this was an unwise step and not in accordance with that patience, forbearance and long-suffering which the Word of God inculcates. We believe that had the saints refrained from this act until sufficient time had been given for brethren elsewhere to know what had been done at Montreal, opportunity would have been given for the Spirit of God to awaken conscience, and to minister the needed truth in grace to those who had been concerned in this whole sorrowful matter.

We believe that while the minds of many were made up, and that while there was a good measure of knowledge of what was taking place, yet it was due the Lord and to our brethren everywhere, that so sudden and radical a step should not have been taken until after every effort had been exhausted and opportunity for consultation had been given. Believing in common with large numbers of saints then, and now, that our brother could not be considered fundamentally unsound, nor a heretic or party-maker, we could not justify the action of the majority or take sides with them. We have, therefore, gone on with one another in the refusal of that action, rather than in approval of the special detail at Craig Street of which we speak.

We may add however, that profiting we trust by our failure at that time, we have sought, when trouble threatened, to avoid precipitancy, and to be more patient, careful and deliberate.

This statement is given in the belief that we should clear ourselves before the people of God as to the principle involved. We do not do it with any ulterior motive, it having been for many years in mind, as a matter of fact free expression, both private and public, has been given this

sentiment. Should it, under God, be the means of assuring any of our brethren beloved as to our practice and principles, we shall be only too thankful, longing that in this day of feebleness and rebuke, those who love the Shepherd's Voice, may be drawn more closely to Himself, and, therefore, by blessed necessity, more closely one to the other.

The following Brethren have expressed their full fellowship with the above for themselves and for many others:

B. C. GREENMAN, Toronto, Canada.

H. A. GRAY, St. Paul, Minn.

W. H. WILSON, Chicago, Ill.

A. H. SCOTT, Alton, Ill.

J. H. FLEMING, Minneapolis, Minn.

J. B. GOTTSBALL, Lehighton, Pa.

GEO. McCANDLESS, Phila., Pa.

J. F. PARKER, Plainfield, N. J.

P. J. LOIZEAUX, Plainfield, N. J.

T. O. LOIZEAUX, Plainfield, N. J.

SAM'L RIDOUT, Plainfield, N. J.

J. T. MANAHAN, Elizabeth, N. J.

F. G. PERKINS, Newark, N. J.

GEO. MCKENZIE, Kenelworth, N. J.

J. F. GILMOUR, Brooklyn, N. Y.

J. B. JACKSON, Boston, Mass.

*To the brethren who signed a letter (undated) and to the Saints gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ at West Front Street, Plainfield, N. J.*

BELoved BRETHREN: Permit us a word of comment on a letter addressed "to the Saints gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ"; and to which therefore we have, through the grace of God, a clear title; although we are told it was intended primarily for some brethren in England, in the hope that such disavowal as it contains with regard to matters in Montreal in 1884 might lead to a restoration of fellowship with those particular brethren. Would that it could restore fellowship to the whole Church of God, but that neither you nor we can anticipate or hope.

We note with some surprise, that not one of those who signed this letter was personally or directly implicated at Montreal in 1884 at all. Many of those who were there are still living, yet not one of their names appears. Would it not have been well to let the brethren who *were* there, and knew the exigencies of that trying time, have had at least *some* part in this confession? You are really only saying "we are sorry others acted hastily," while there is no indication that those who were there have any regrets.

But we cannot forget another place where some of your signers *were* actually present and another act in which they at least had personally a prominent part. If you confess someone else acted hastily in Montreal, is there no cause, dear brethren, to confess that you yourselves acted hastily at Pittsburgh? There you practically involved your brethren in a course quite at variance with the deepest convictions of many of them, and that without giving them any voice, or opportunity for counsel in the matter; yet, if they could not accord with that legislation, and surrender their convictions, there was really nothing left but expulsion from you—and so it has worked out. In one day you reversed a conclusion patiently arrived at after many days' conference in Plainfield in 1892 with great unanimity "by many hundreds of saints gathered there from all parts" for this very purpose. Then a circular was issued, announcing this conclusion and expressing great thankfulness for the striking, we might say marvellous unanimity with which this had been arrived at, and this was signed by three brethren, two of whom are now signatories of your letter. Was not the Pittsburgh act rather hasty? Would not your own words

apply to this with peculiar force when you say "so sudden and radical a step should not have been taken until after every effort had been exhausted and opportunity for consultation had been given?" Do you not yourselves recognize that there should be a disavowal of the "sudden and radical step" at Pittsburgh—of that in which you were directly involved, rather than a vicarious confession for others? If this should be a forerunner of *that*, God knows how welcome it would be, but your letter ignores it so completely that you actually do not shrink from claiming to have gathered such profit from this mistake at Montreal, as *not to have fallen into the same "precipitancy" since*. Yet 1894 came after 1884, and to our minds the Pittsburgh action strongly forbids any such complacent assurance altogether. Pardon us, beloved brethren, if we put the matter to you plainly—such plainness of speech does not speak lack of brotherly love—but you go back to 1884, pass over 1894, disavow the wrong of others, have no word of disavowal of your own; have much consideration for some brethren in England, ignore utterly the brethren just outside your own closed door in Plainfield. Why are brethren in England dearer to you than those at your side—those whom you have not seen, than those you have? Is this quite consistent with the claim to no "ulterior motive?"

Here we are, longing and ready to express our unity with you—not because of any accord of convictions as to what brethren did at Montreal or Pittsburgh or anywhere else, but solely as to what our Lord Jesus Christ did for us all on Calvary 1900 years ago. Is not that enough? Would you add to it?

And here may we ask, dear brethren, has there not been a general letting slip of truth by us all as to the place, purpose and significance of the Lord's Supper in having made it into a kind of sign or *announcement* of a party position? Thus when brethren break bread at Craig Street it is as if they not only started another local gathering to the Lord's Name, which of course is true, but, as you put it, a new issue was raised which could only be by starting or announcing another *party*. It has apparently become difficult to conceive of anything that is not a party, or of the Lord's Supper apart from such. But does not this depend upon the principles and spirit that governed them? If they acted simply scripturally they did not break bread in separation from any real saint anywhere, but in fellowship with all saints, including those who had practically excluded them, with Mr. F. W. Grant, from Natural History Hall. Here in Plainfield you may, and indeed do, break bread in Front Street in separation from us in Liberty Street, but we never in separation from you, for in spirit and principle we heartily take you in, as we do all saints.

But again, did not the Lord command (most tenderly and in greatest grace, we gladly recognize, but still command) that the breaking of bread should *continue in remembrance of Him*? Were then our brethren who were excluded with Mr. F. W. Grant from obedience to this command in one place, not to obey it at all in another, until they had some human permission to do so? Does their continued obedience to the divine command necessitate the charge of "haste" or "independency," or anything else? Is it a "radical step" to obey the Lord's gracious word? If this act of obedience of our brethren did not necessarily mean a lack of fellowship with any saint, why should any disavow fellowship with them in it? Your very disavowal seems to be based on a view of eating the bread and drinking the cup that finds, as far as we can see, no support in Scripture, and indeed is only possible in connection with a very unscriptural view of it.

Your letter closes with the longing that "those who in this day of feebleness and rebuke love the Shepherd's voice, may be drawn more closely to Himself, and, therefore, by blessed necessity more closely to each other." A most gracious desire most graciously expressed. But, dear brethren, would you confine this characteristic to yourselves or to those whom you had in mind in your letter? Surely not; we do not believe it. But is loving the Shepherd's voice and desiring to gather more closely all who do so, shown *by the rejection of His sheep?* We do not *desire* to question the sincerity of your words, yet, dear brethren, how can we help it? Do not acts ever speak louder than words; and is your present attitude to us an evidence of their sincerity? *We love His voice (although we would much rather our lives than our lips expressed it),* and we too long to see all who do love that Voice gathered more closely together, but were we to raise barriers against those who give clear evidence of loving Him too, how *could* we speak with any truth, sincerity, or simple honesty?

We realize that we need you much—very much—yet must we say that we seek no amalgamation with or admission into any circle of fellowship exclusive of true saints—a limited confederacy of gatherings. *We will have, we dare have, none of it.* Were you, or any such "circle," "Exclusive" or "Open," or what-not, to offer us to-day an opening, upon our undertaking to be confined to it, we should still be compelled, in the fear of God, to decline conditions that should never be demanded. Our great difficulty is not only to keep out of such already formed (and, for this, all the opposing parties are at least at one in condemning us), but to avoid forming afresh another such circle ourselves.

What do we seek? Simply that you would remove the shame brought on the Shepherd by the barrier you have raised around His Table against many of His sheep. What can *we* do in it? We certainly have not made the barrier—on our part it does not exist at all against you—how then can we take it down? That we would join you in strengthening all barriers against wickedness and worldliness we need not tell you. But, beloved brethren, we beg you to consider that you are still casting out brethren for the one sole reason that they desire to receive those whom you acknowledge to be brethren; and that—as sure as 3 John is God's word—is as contrary to Scripture as receiving those who bring not the doctrine of Christ; and little should we love you did we not seek to deliver you from so serious a position.

We feel confident that many a conscience will respond to all we say: many a heart will desire to walk as the conscience bids: upon a few leaders (and for those we have only sincere esteem when filling their proper sphere) will still rest, we fear, the grave responsibility of silencing or dulling the voice of the conscience, of obstructing the course the heart would take.

For the saints gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus at 110 Liberty Street, Plainfield, N. J.

E. G. MAUGER,  
W. R. H. HARDINGHAM,  
F. C. JENNINGS.

June, 1912.