

A Letter

As Written by F. W. Grant, During
the Summer of 1896, to a
Brother in Kansas

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J. H. Claar, Bedford, Pa.

My dear Brother:—

Your letter made me glad and sorry; glad to see that you desired to act with care and before God, and sorry for the distress being caused in so many places, and the need of turning aside from happier work to enter upon what seems but contention with one's brethren. It was on this account that though I did write an examination of "Our Attitude" long since it was never printed. Partly in the hope that our brethren would yet think better of it and partly hoping that things could be met in a better way than by the multiplication of papers which again provokes others, leaving always a last word to be said by some one which may be considered unanswerable if not answered.

However, we are now debating as to printing my examination which with my "Statement as to fellowship with O. B.," will give all the points that are of any importance. In a letter one can only indicate briefly what these are, the principles being of course what is of much seriousness, though the actions they have led to, have much to say in this way. But the movement has gone much further in both re-

spects than "Our Attitude" shows, and I shall have briefly to speak of this. No doubt you will receive the other more recent papers which are being sent to every address that they can obtain.

The meeting here in 1892 acted, I grieve to say, in too much haste, upon representations made to us with regard to the position of those called "Open Brethren" with whom we had long been compelled to refuse fellowship on account of their allowance of associations with the followers of B. W. Newton, who had taught blasphemous doctrine as to the Lord. This you will see in the tracts I send you and I need not speak more of it now. It was stated to us that these practices and principles had been given up, no one could say "judged" for they never did, and do not admit that they have ever been in error. Yet we concluded that as their practices now had changed we could receive them with discrimination as from the orthodox denominations.

We soon began to find our mistake, that confusion was being introduced into our own meetings by it, that their principles and practices were not really changed; and the N. Y. and Pittsburgh papers recalling the Plainfield one were the necessary consequences. Then the opposition arose which shows itself in "Our Attitude" and it was a question now if we were going to give up the principles we had always, and still hold to be scriptural, or take the consequences. These brethren now take the ground distinctly of refusing a "circle of fellowship" altogether apart from that of

the whole body of Christ and we are called "Sectarianists in the extreme" to speak of this. We are to be nothing but independent gatherings, each competent for itself upon all questions and in no way bound by the action of the rest. **The consequences of which are the destruction of all true fellowship and of all firm discipline.**

The movement with which they have identified themselves is headed by Mr. Burrige who got together at Adelpin Hall, N. Y., a number of brethren who decided in two days conference that there was nothing wrong as to the divisions among "brethren" so called, but in their **being** divided. To give voice to this belief a number broke bread together before separating, and a circular announced this as a great work of the Spirit of God. At that meeting they received a person holding false doctrine as to the person of the Lord, and another who had gathered an independent meeting along with his meeting, he having been away from us for years on account of false doctrine of the most serious nature, and as to which no repentance had ever been manifested.

More lately Mr. Burrige returned from England distinctly to propagate his views amongst us. So the O. B. periodicals announced entirely in accordance with counsels given in his own magazine, started in the meantime for the propagation of them. We were "a sect," but those who held with him were not to leave us on that account **but to remain and spread these views among us.** He offered himself at S. Brooklyn for fellowship and was received by

them in spite of protests from four of us; protests they knew could easily have been multiplied a hundred-fold; but they were united about it, and we were outside that meeting. To make it a more thorough defence, a person from each of four neighboring gatherings went to S. Brooklyn that morning to welcome their leader and introduce additional perplexity among us.

There was upon this, a meeting called at N. Y. of all the gatherings around to consider what was to be done in the matter. S. B. refused to come. It was decided that we could not accept Mr. Burrige as fit for fellowship among us, but that we should ask S. B. to let us come to them if they would not come to us, that we might consider what was in question. We did so, and Mr. B. told us their gatherings were only united to one another by their Head in heaven, so that the brethren were within their rights in receiving him; but if one amongst them had objected, it would have been another thing. I told them that their communion was a merely formal thing. **All our consciences** were of much less account than **one** among themselves. However the value of this had to be proved and was proved shortly afterwards.

Nothing seemed gained and we had another meeting in N. Y. to consider the matter. But in the meanwhile some of the brethren there had come to be exercised about the condition of things and there was hope as to their giving way, some in fact did so and became as earnest as ourselves to have the matter reconsidered. Consequently for weeks nothing was done. Mr.

B. was gone and there were those in S. B. who would not receive him. But the test came. One who had been refused at De Kalb for similar reasons with Mr. B. presented himself along with one who had left us for the O. B. fellowship and who had ever since been actively working against us and is today, and although now there was a protest on the part of many against their reception, they were both unhesitatingly received, 14 or 15 being forced out in this way from among them.

Another appeal was made to S. B. and like all else disregarded, and then those forced out were finally owned as those with whom we were in fellowship. Here in Plainfield the brethren who sympathized with S. B. had already left us and have now taken a separate room. **It is a question of principles discordant with one another and of whether or not we are to retain the truth, which God has given us. That truth the O. B. have everywhere shown themselves unable to hold, and with every one who has gone among them one cannot but note the steady loss of it.**

Strangely enough these brethren deny that they are "Open Brethren" or intend going with them, but this seems only to be on account of the strict baptist views prevailing among the latter. With doors wide open to them everywhere, and views otherwise quite alike, it would be impossible to keep themselves apart. Nay if they have no circle of fellowship it would be impossible to say who "themselves" are. Yet they are endeavoring with all their power to form their circle of independent meetings out

of our own, and alas they may find that it is too little a circle of fellowship. They are seeking a **broad ground**, and though we can say little for ourselves, yet it means a **lower one**. The argument as to 2 John shows this clearly; for in that and a similar paper in Burrige's magazine the writer makes the whole question one of life in the soul, and that is what the O. B. started with and what we have heard recently again and again among these of late—that we should not put away from us any of those with whom, if the Lord came, we should be found together.

Now if so, putting away of any Christian would be impossible; and this is what the stress laid upon "wickedness" seems to mean with them. It is always a doubt at least, as to whether this does not mean that a person is not born again who is capable of it. But wickedness may be something else than drunkenness or theft, and more to be dreaded in proportion as it is spiritual wickedness. A drunkard will not scatter the sheep of Christ or draw away disciples after him. Those of whom Satan makes use when coming in as an "angel of light" will certainly not be the open evil doers but the very opposite. A man like Mr. B. comes as a good man who believes you are a sect, but will be glad to come in among you the more effectually to fight your sectarianism. Are we to give him his opportunity because we cannot discern his leprous spots or shall we think of the saints and say to him "Brother if these are your principles you have no right to come to us. Stay outside of us if we are wrong and

fight us from the outside and we shall respect you as an honest man; but we should be unfaithful to a sacred trust if we permitted you to divide the house from inside."

This is in effect what I did say to him at S. B. and he answered me, he had used too strong a word in saying "sect" but he meant the same thing whether he used the word or not, and had we received him we should have had to receive many more of the same kind and ourselves have introduced a disorder and strife for which we should have been accountable.

Now holding what I do as truth I call an attempt of this kind "wicked." Mr. B. is not an ignorant or simple man but the reverse, and an attempt to get inside to sow dissension among us, bears upon its face what is dishonorable and wrong, and alas, this does not stand alone with Mr. B. But I send you tracts which will tell you more than a letter. If as I suppose the further one comes out I shall hope to send you that also.

May the Lord use all this to send us to our knees and to His word, already its effect in this way seems to be apparent. The study of the word is I believe, reviving among us and our meeting here in the summer was of a most cheering character. We hope to give notice soon of another for '97.

If I can add anything to what I have said and there is need, write me again. "A Divine Movement" states just really the principles.

F. W. GRANT.