

*Arthur Cooke*

ALL YE ARE BRETHREN.

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In the weekly issue of "The Life of Faith" dated August 27, 1930, the Editor expresses his "Christian love and goodwill to our devoted fellow believers among the Brethren, who share with us a like precious faith..... on the Celebration of its Centenary of this honoured section of the Church of Christ".

He further deplures the fact that there is no central organization to whom felicitations can be sent, and also the fact that separations and divisions have taken place among them since 1830, but admits that without exception they have been loyal to the Word of God, and for the most part have been devoted to the truth of the Lord's Second Coming.

It is publicly known then, that the movement with which we are connected had its beginnings just a little over a century ago; that we do not celebrate this fact as most of the humanly constituted sects do; that we recognise no head or centre on earth; and that while the truth of God is maintained in greater or lesser measure among us, there has been and is among us separations and divisions.

I might further add what the brother who wrote the paragraph might not be so ready to acknowledge; that the movement which began amongst a few exercised souls in 1827 or thereabouts, was distinctly a movement energised by the Spirit of God, and had in view a revival of Scriptural truths and practices, which since the Apostles days had been practically unknown. The chief of these was the truth of the Assembly, and the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; the first being the recovery of the truth of the present dispensation--Christ the Head in heaven, and the Body down here formed by the Holy Ghost, the fulness of, and in subjection to the Head; the second being the hope of the Assembly--first of all to be caught up to meet Him in the air, and later to come forth with Him to reign, His Body, His Bride.

I suppose there are many amongst us like myself who have been converted whilst connected with one or other of the various sects of Christendom, and who, dissatisfied with the deadness around them, have been brought into contact with Christians who had more light and intelligence than themselves, and found that they conducted their meetings on more Scriptural lines, acknowledging the Lord Jesus as their Head, and recognising the Holy Spirit in a practical way as the power for worship and ministry. What a relief it has been to get away from those systems where man is put in the place of Christ, and the Holy Spirit is quenched, and, as gathered simply to His Name, realise the preciousness of His presence with us according to His Word. Matt.18.20. It may have surprised us to find out later that there may be several companies meeting on similar lines in the same city with no intercommunion between them, and the question is raised in the mind as to the origin of such meetings, and why are we divided. I have often been asked for an explanation of these divisions, but occupation with them is unprofitable to the soul, and were it not to bring out the fact of the persistent and relentless attacks of the enemy to oppose and destroy or neutralise the truth; and the continued effort of the Spirit of God to maintain the Saints in the good of it, would be worthless. It is a conflict which will be continued until the moment of His return--blessed, if like the beloved Apostle Paul we are able to say at the end of our pathway--"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the Faith". 2 Tim. 4.7.

Early in the Nineteenth Century there had been amongst Christians a revival of interest in Prophetic Truth, especially in regard to the restoration of Israel to their own land, (Palestine) and the consequent glory of Messiah's reign. Prophetic meetings were held at which these truths were discussed, and Clergymen & private gentlemen came freely to these meetings where they learnt with interest of the fact that the Lord Jesus was coming a second time to take up His power and reign, and also the various events that would happen before, at, and after His appearing. The distinctions too between the hopes of Israel and the hope of the Church was made plain, and when the calling and hopes of the latter were understood it led some to see that the systems with which they had been connected in a religious way, were unscriptural and sectarian, and that to remain where they were would be a practical denial of what the Church is according to Scripture.

Andrew Miller in his book on "The Brethren" states that the first formal meeting was held in a private house in Dublin in the winter of 1827-28 when four Christian young men, who had been for some time exercised as to the condition of the entire professing Church agreed to come together on Lord's Day mornings for the breaking of bread as the

early Christians did, counting on the Lord to be with them. This put them into a place of separation from all ecclesiastical systems, and they came together simply in the Name of the Lord Jesus, owning the presence of the Holy Spirit in their midst to guide and direct as He willed. That this first meeting was of God the results have abundantly proved. One of the four, writing to the editor of a French newspaper in 1878, in reply to an enquiry as to the brethren and their doctrines, wrote as follows:-

"The Word declares to us that where two or three are gathered to the Name of Jesus, He will be in the midst (Matt. 18.20). This is what we have done. There were only four of us to do it at the first; not I hope in a spirit of pride or presumption, but deeply grieved at seeing the state of that which surrounded us, praying for all Christians, and recognising all those who possessed the Spirit of God, every true Christian wherever he may be found ecclesiastically, as members of the body of Christ. We were not thinking of anything else, dear Sir, than of satisfying the need of our souls according to the Word of God, and we had no thought that the thing would have gone any further. We have thus found the promised presence of the Lord. Salvation through Christ has been preached when there was gift to do so. The same needs caused others to follow the same road, and thus the work has extended in a way of which we had not the remotest idea. It commenced in Dublin, to spread in the British Isles, on the Continent of Europe, in the British Colonies and more recently in the United States of America, Asia, Africa and elsewhere". J.N.D.

These four and others who were added to their number, continued to meet in a private house in Dublin until the beginning of 1830 when a large auction room was taken for the convenience of those who were attending the meetings. This was their first public meeting place. The first pamphlet written by J.N.D. and published in 1828 entitled "The nature and unity of the Church of Christ" set forth the principles upon which these brethren were acting; not perhaps with the clearness and fulness of later publications, because they were just following the light as made known to them by the Holy Spirit from the Scriptures, but it had a wonderful effect on the Christians who read it. Further, it was found that many Christians all over England and Scotland had been exercised in the same way as those in Dublin, and so, gradually all over the country little meetings sprang up as described in the letter quoted. I need not go into details of the devoted service rendered by the early brethren, their unworldliness, the number of Tracts, Pamphlets and Books written and published for the help and encouragement of Christians, and the immense amount of Gospel Work carried on, but the movement prospered, for the getting back to the Scriptural order of meeting, recognising the supremacy of Christ as Head of the Church, and the power and unction of the Holy Spirit to control and guide appealed to many. Referring to those early days a brother writes as follows:-

"Amongst those who separated from the various organizations were some men of considerable gift, moral weight, intellectual power and intelligence-- Clergymen, Barristers, Solicitors, Military and Naval Officers, Physicians and men of high position and property. Their secession as you may suppose caused a very considerable stir and drew forth much opposition. Many a link of friendship was snapped; many a fondly cherished companionship was broken up; many sacrifices were made, much sorrow and trial were encountered; much reproach, obloquy and persecution had to be endured..... All this attracted much attention; many wondered whereunto it would grow, and some prophesied that it would all soon come to nothing. C.H.M. Things New & Old. Vol. 18.

As a matter of fact many could not see how brethren could be held together, and their meetings be without disorder, when they were without President, or Minister, or Chairman to keep order. Such *did* not understand that the movement was of God, and as the Lord Jesus is acknowledged as Head, and room made for the operations of the Spirit, so meetings are kept in perfect harmony, without confusion or disorder of any kind. There may have been occasional failure, but for the most part, and it is just as true to-day; where there is no human arrangement or order as to who shall take part in the meetings, yet the presence of the Lord is felt, and the order of communion and worship is most striking

There was as stated above, a great deal of opposition on the part of Clergy and Ministers of all denominations and many books and pamphlets were written against brethren, and much persecution endured, but the opposition from without, as usually it does, only served to draw them closer together. We have now to deal with a movement from within which would have neutralised the Truth of the unity of the Body of Christ, and denied the presence of the Holy Ghost in the Assembly.

Plymouth in the South of England had become a centre of much activity in Gospel work, so much so that in 1845 there were between 800 and 900 in communion there, and some very gifted men among them. There had been for some years previously a distinct movement in that meeting towards Clericalism. Certain brothers who had taken part in the meetings, in giving out a hymn, or reading a Scripture, had been taken to task by the leaders for so doing; and given to understand that the audible participation in praise, worship or ministry was to be confined to certain leaders and when others took part in a similar way, means were found in one way or another to stop the practice. Some felt that the presence of the Holy Ghost was practically denied, and the attention of the Assembly was drawn to this fact. The leaven however was working too deeply, and the influence of the leaders too great for matters to be mended, and so clerical authority was maintained. In order to continue in what they felt was of God some 50 or 60 separated from them and after a time of waiting they broke bread apart. Thus early did the will of man seek to nullify the truth of God. In 1847 it became apparent that there was more behind this Clericalism than had appeared on the surface. It seems that B.W. Newton, one of the teachers there had been giving addresses of which notes had been taken, and copies were being diligently circulated by various sisters, amongst those who were in sympathy with this teacher. A packet of these notes having fallen into the hands of one of the Seceders, he says he felt surprised and shocked at such unscriptural statements and doctrine. As set forth in Millers History these unscriptural statements represented the Lord Jesus as born at a distance from God, involved in the guilt of the first Adam because He was born of a woman, and under the curse of a broken law because of His association with Israel. As might be expected the publication of these notes created great alarm among brethren for they saw that if true it meant that the Lord Jesus was no Saviour-- nay, He needed a Saviour Himself. Newton seeing the alarm that had been created withdrew them for re-consideration, and in 1848 according to Meathy's History issued "a letter on subjects connected with the Lord's humanity" which appeared to both J.N. Darby and George Muller to re-affirm the objectionable doctrine in its essence though with great modification of terms.

In 1848 the meeting at Bethesda Chapel, Bristol was in a flourishing condition numerically and had as leaders George Muller and Henry Craik. It was known that they had been receiving to the Lord's Table there, those who held and taught B.W. Newton's views as to the Person of Christ. Some protested and entreated that the doctrine should be judged, and those who held it excluded from their fellowship, and meetings were held to discuss the matter. The principles that this company adopted in dealing with questions that arose outside their own immediate gathering, are set forth in a letter signed by ten of the leading brethren there. One of its clauses states:-

"Supposing the author of the tracts were fundamentally heretical, this would not warrant us in rejecting those who came from under his teaching, until we were satisfied that they had understood and imbibed views essentially subversive of foundation truth".

Those who protested looked upon this judgment as meaning that association with known evil does not defile a person or assembly, and between 50 and 60 withdrew from Bethesda fellowship rather than sanction such a loose principle, and commenced breaking bread apart. Thus in Bristol a positive division now existed, and the rulers in Bethesda were "gravely charged with having ensnared the congregation into a course of neutrality with regard to heresy; independency as to the church; and indifference as to the Person and Glory of Christ". (Millers History. p.65) The position was later tersely summed up in the following words "Evil communications" do not at Bethesda "Corrupt good manners", and one who receives him who "bringeth not the doctrines of Christ" is yet not a partaker of his evil deeds". F.W.G.

A Polemical warfare now started and tracts and pamphlets bearing on both sides of the question were issued and circulated everywhere amongst the Saints, and needless to say a great deal of exercise and alarm resulted. When the leaders at Bethesda realised this they agreed to look into the matter of Newton's teaching, and in result they arrived at the following judgment:-

"That no one defending, maintaining, and upholding Mr. Newton's views or tracts should be received into communion".

This did not however heal the breach, for those who had seceded pointed out that this left the door as wide open as ever to those who were in avowed fellowship with Mr. Newton, provided they did not "defend, maintain, or uphold his views or tracts.

There being now two companies at both Plymouth and Bethesda, it became necessary ~~for others to decide whether Bethesda principles were~~ to be generally accepted or otherwise, and this question affected the meetings all over the world. It should be evident to the simplest Christian that the Spirit of God would not lead some at Plymouth to separate from others on account of allowed clerisy and evil teaching, and that these should come to Bristol and be expected there to break bread with those from whom they had separated in Plymouth. But Bethesda took that ground, and would have received individuals from both parties after examination. By the seceders this was felt to be wrong and that Bethesda should have decided which of the two companies at Plymouth had been acting for the Lord there, and received from that company alone. Had this been done in the fear of the Lord unity would have been maintained, but alas it was otherwise and a whole world wide division took place.

Those who thought that Bethesda was right, maintain to this day the same principles. Open Brethren as they are called, because of their professed open principles, are no doubt for the most part sound in the faith, but the danger of receiving those who are not sound in the faith is apparent. "A perfect stranger can break bread on his or her own responsibility, and a letter of commendation from any church or minister of the Gospel is sufficient as an introduction to fellowship, unless there is reason to believe that the church is lax in walk or unsound in doctrine". (Bethesda Family Matters by E.K.Groves). Writing in 1895 the late F.W.Grant says:-

"How largely Bethesda has given character to the gatherings of Open Brethren should be plain to all. It has acted as leaven by which the mass is being leavened. The rampant independence, the incipient clerisy, the general insistence on certain views of baptism, the resistance to the truth revived among us all this (realised in various degrees it is true) shows how real a leavening process has been at work. (Statement for examination as to fellowship with open brethren)

That this is true may be seen to-day in Sydney where a prominent evangelist is received in some meetings and excluded from others, while at the same time individuals from those meetings that exclude him can break bread with him in those meetings that receive him. The Scriptural principle is that if any one is fit for fellowship in one meeting, he is fit for fellowship in all. It is true that many meetings of open brethren are more exclusive than the so-called exclusives, but they spoil all by their independency, for it is no new thing for two or three meetings to be going on in one suburb of Sydney because of disagreement among themselves and one from each of these meetings break bread together in a meeting in another suburb.

The "Needed Truth" movement (so-called from the name of its magazine) which originated about the Seventies of last Century, and found its expression in Australia in the "Rice Hopkins" movement, was commenced because of the looseness prevalent amongst the open brethren at that time. Neatby states that "it aimed at imposing a narrower and more exclusive practice than had ever prevailed in any section of the brethren whatsoever". I daresay his verdict is correct. In its development it has made some excessive claims, such as that the "Needed Truth" company in any city is the Church of God in that City

to the exclusion of all else; and that simply because of their acceptance of certain doctrines. They also claim that their assemblies together form "the fellowship of God's Son Jesus Christ our Lord"; that they form "The House of God"; the unity of the Spirit" and much else (see discerning the Body, by Alexander) These claims sufficiently condemn them as not of God. They also are very strong on oversight, and have overseers appointed for local, district, and national purposes. There have been divisions amongst this section too and those in England do not now recognise the "Rice Hopkins people in Australia. A small meeting was last year started in Sydney.

That the so-called exclusives were right in their refusal of Bethesda I have no doubt, and that they were supported in their action by the Lord is proved by the wealth of gift and ministry that was given to them. Even Neatby in his history notices this in the following words "For the most part the writers of the open brethren are hardly more than an echo of Darby, Kelly, Bellett, Denny and Deck" and Neatby is no friend of the exclusives. The following extract written in 1930 will explain better than I can what was involved in the issue:-

"Exclusivism, or that which the word rightly stands for, namely separation from iniquity and vessels to dishonour, I believe to be a great truth of Scripture, and the first step in the path that God has marked out for His people in the midst of the ruin of these last days. It stands in contrast to the "looseness", "indifference" and "independence" that the self-will of our flesh so dearly loves. Like every other principle of God it can be and has been greatly abused. None the less I believe we owe the great recovery of truth in this last century to the maintenance of this principle. And only as this principle is rightly maintained will these truths be retained; while the abandonment of this principle is invariably followed by the loss of truth and the absence of worship in its true character. (H.S. Facts restated).

That there have been further sad divisions amongst these brethren we shall now seek to trace, but we shall find that in none of them is there any question of error such as we have seen at Plymouth.

After the Bethesda trouble as it is called, there was comparative quiet for many years and during that period there was a continual accession of numbers to the various meetings of brethren. In 1866 some question was raised by certain brethren as to the teaching of J.N. Darby on the "Sufferings of Christ". It was stated that it was on the same line as that of Newton, but J.N.D. indignantly repudiated this. According to J.B. Stoney, Mr. Dorman condemned J.N.D. for saying that the Lord Jesus bore sufferings which were not atoning, and that He gave up the life to which sin attached. Mr. Dorman would not have it that Christ bore the judgment; he held that He only bore death. This controversy ended in brethren as a whole accepting the teaching of J N D. and only a few left the meetings at that time.

The year 1877 witnessed the beginnings of a further division. At Temperance Hall, Ryde, there was breaking bread a brother and sister who had contracted an illegal marriage. The brother by marrying his deceased wife's sister which at that time was against the laws of England. Evidently this was not known when they were received, but later became known, and after a lot of exercise, according to one account the majority seceded on the refusal of the meeting to excommunicate the two concerned. According to another account about one third of the meeting seceded on this ground but they did not break bread together. About the same time a young clergyman left the Church of England and was received in one of the London meetings and on returning to Ryde, instead of breaking bread with the meeting there, he began the observance of the Lord's Supper in his own home with some others and later transferred to the Masonic Hall. Dr. Cronin who was one of the original four who met in Dublin, visited Ryde and passing by the recognised meeting went and broke bread twice with the Masonic Hall Company. When he returned to London, Kennington meeting which he attended raised some objection to this, and forty or fifty there disowned all fellowship with the new meeting. There developed such a disturbance among other London brethren over the independent action of Dr. Cronin that the Kennington meeting felt obliged to excommunicate him, although it was stated that he promised not to repeat the offence

and to abstain from breaking bread for the time being. As Kennington was thought to be rather slow in acting Park Street meeting sent out a declaration that they owned no fellowship with Dr. Cronin on account of his schismatic act, and refused fellowship with Kennington and any other meeting that had fellowship with them.

The Abbots Hill Ramsgate meeting received this Park St. notice and at an assembly meeting it was rejected. Individual action was then taken by a number of brethren there, who one by one left the Abbots Hill meeting and started another at Guildford Hall, Ramsgate. Some time had elapsed since the Ryde matter which meanwhile had been simmering and in 1881 things came to a head by two of the London meetings deciding to fellowship Guildford Hall and refusing Abbots Hill. Other meetings like Blackheath gave as their judgment, that the Seceders were wrong in leaving Abbots Hill, as those who remained were right in refusing (not a godly judgment in the sphere of their duty, but) a groundless and therefore sinful division-- the seceders had left divine ground if the mass of brethren remained on it. The results were disastrous as sides were taken by one and another, and it ended in a very great and widespread separation of old friends and brethren. As Blackheath was the meeting that the late Wm. Kelly attended, those who agreed with its judgment have been called the Kelly party. Most of sober brethren now looking back over this sad division think that it was totally uncalled for, and as both J.M.D. who did not agree with Dr. Cronin's act, and Dr. Cronin himself passed home in 1882, feel that it was a pity the brethren had not taken a more lenient view of Dr. Cronin's offence, and allowed him to go on in fellowship. This Kelly Company has since enjoyed comparative tranquility and are characterised by sound teaching without any of the doctrinal vagaries of some. Early in this century they lost a number of meetings, which opened their doors to the Bethesda fellowship. They have lately resumed fellowship with the Bexhill Company, to be referred to later.

In 1884/5 there arose some trouble at Reading. It began with personal differences between brothers and sisters in the meeting there and should perhaps have been dealt with according to Matt. 18. It eventually came before the assembly there for judgment and according to C. Bloomfields history and review, both the brother and sister were cleared of any evil intent but when the latter was requested to withdraw a letter she had written, refused to do so. As the matters between them were embodied in letters which the assembly had before it, the decision was practically unanimous, though some felt that it was unrighteous to justify both accuser and accused. Some of the number did not resume breaking bread again and eventually started a new meeting at Reading.

Shortly after the brother Mr. C.E. Stuart published a pamphlet entitled "Christian Standing and Condition" which further complicated matters. It seems that the sister referred to had got into trouble originally by objecting to some phases of Mr. Stuart's ministry, and now those teachings she had objected to were published. The gist of it is, that the christian standing is limited to being before God's Throne as justified, and rests solely on what the Lord has endured for us; and no higher position can the saint have. "In Christ, is condition or the state in which God views us. Now this denies the teaching very generally accepted amongst brethren as the truth of God, namely, that our old man is judicially terminated by having been crucified with Christ, and that being in Christ constitutes Christian Standing, for we are accepted in the Beloved. Another thing came out in a later tract written by Mr. Stuart, that atonement was not completed on the cross but in heaven, and after death, whereas the accepted teaching is that when the Lord Jesus cried "It is finished" the whole work of atonement was complete. These pamphlets brought out a number of protests against such teaching but Mr. Stuart held to, and <sup>affirmed</sup> justified them as the truth of God. Had it not been for these pamphlets probably the judgment of the Reading Assembly would have been generally accepted, but many brethren felt that truth was at stake and when the Bath meeting decided to receive one of the seceders from Reading the majority fell in with it. At the same time it may be said that those who supported Reading, felt that while the teaching may have been faulty, there was no fundamental error that would warrant a division, and many who have been involved in later divisions would probably now agree.

In New Zealand a goodly number of meetings remained in fellowship with Reading, and one in Brisbane. The latter is now in fellowship with the Glanton brethren who had had a long correspondence with the New Zealand brethren with regard to the resumption of fellowship broken at that time. They however took the ground that as they had been right from the start in having fellowship with Reading, and we had left the true ground of fellowship we must own our fault before we could be recognised for they had changed neither their position, principles or practices. It was in vain we pointed out that none of us had been concerned in that division as all were then spiritually unborn, and to accept their terms meant simply a transfer to a party. We felt it would be hypocrisy to profess to own to a fault which we did not believe we had committed, and that ended the matter.

About the same time on the other side of the Atlantic, Mr. F.W. Grant had published a pamphlet entitled "Life in Christ and Sealing with the Spirit" which brought about a good deal of controversy. Labouring at Montreal, Canada at that time were two English Brethren, Lord A.P. Cecil and Mr. Alfred Mace who objected to some of the teaching contained in the pamphlet. The question of fellowship with F.W. Grant was raised in the meeting at Montreal and it was decided to refuse fellowship with him on the ground that he taught:-

1. That Old Testament Saints were "in the Son" and had eternal life in Him.
2. When thus born we are forgiven, justified, no longer in the flesh but in Christ, and dead to sin and the law.
3. That New Birth gives us the full position of Sons of God.
4. That Romans 7 is the experience of one justified in Christ, sealed, and seeking to be fruitful and holy.
5. That souls may have peace and be justified and not know it, have the Holy Ghost and be in bondage.

Why the matter was taken up at Montreal and not at Plainfield where Mr. Grant lived is not very clear. This decision was communicated to them however and they refused the Montreal decision on the ground that, the doctrines in question when fairly taken from our brother Grant's pamphlet in no wise touch foundation truths, therefore patience with one another should be exercised, and freedom of conscience must be allowed. Trouble was not averted and many of the meetings in U.S.A. divided over the action of Montreal.

Mr. Grant did not agree with Mr. Stuart's teaching but these two companies have always had intercommunion between them, until lately. I understand the New Zealand Stuart brethren have fellowship only with that section of the Grant brethren who refuse to open the door to fellowship with open brethren. This division did not affect Australia.

In 1890 further trouble arose in London over the teaching of Mr. F. E. Raven who was located at Greenwich. Some leading brethren accused him of wrong teaching on the question of Eternal Life. It seems that two years previously at a reading meeting of the Lord's Labourers at Witney, he had made statements on the subject which nearly all present objected to. He was trying to distinguish between having Eternal Life, and being in the enjoyment of it, and used expressions which undoubtedly were faulty and lent themselves to misunderstanding. During the following two years there was considerable controversy and he was accused of forcing new doctrines and making a party. Towards the end of 1889 about 150 well known brothers met with F.E.R. to go into matters with him and Dr. Wolston has recorded that Raven was under examination for five hours, and that though he had gone to the meeting decidedly prejudiced against him, he was at the end of the meeting bound in honour before God to give him his hand. But that did not end matters for in 1890 a number seceded from the meeting at Ealing, the chief ground of the secession being that in writing to a brother at Ealing Mr. Raven had used the following expression:-

"The effort of many is to maintain that Eternal Life is a person and I am not prepared to accept this. Scripture does not say that Eternal Life is Christ, but that Christ is Eternal Life".

But Mr. Raven had stated in the same letter that I John teaches us that Eternal Life was essentially and ever with the Father, in the Person of the Son in Whom it was manifested by His incarnation to His disciples, and that Eternal Life is in the Son, Who is the true God and Eternal Life and that the heavenly condition of relationship and being in which Eternal Life consists, exists, and is embodied, and expressed in Him, and we in having the Son have Eternal Life.

About the same time the meeting at Bexhill refused a letter of commendation from Greenwich, on the ground that Greenwich was sheltering an unsound teacher, and that they were in a divided state. Greenwich pointed out to them that both grounds were untrue, as no charge against Mr. Raven had been preferred before the meeting there, by any person either within or without the meeting. Quite a number broke away from the various meetings in fellowship with Greenwich, accounting Mr. Raven a heretic, but very many felt that while there was great cause for exercise in his teaching, they could not condemn him as a heretic, and so remained. In later years he developed a strange medley of teaching, especially on his visit to America in 1898 and 1902 but he was called home not long after his last visit. Both W. Kelly and F.W. Grant have published reviews of his teaching in U.S.A. Those who left included some capable brethren and they carried with them nearly all the meetings in the Continent of Europe, and in Egypt and Syria. There were not many in Australia who seceded. They are referred to as the Bexhill Company. Since then there has been a division amongst them over a matter at Tunbridge Wells but this did not affect the meetings in Australia. Last year they arranged with the Kelly Company to resume intercommunion, but some on both sides refused the change and meet apart.

In 1908 another division was consummated over a local matter at Alnwick in Northumberland. For some nine years previously there had been a strong party feeling in the meeting there, and it eventuated on January 1, 1905 in a notice drawn up at a private house and signed by nine brother of the one party, being read before the breaking of bread, naming four brothers of the other party, and declaring these four brothers as put away from amongst us. It seems that they all broke bread together that morning but in much confusion. Those nine with some others making a party of fifteen, one of whom was the owner of the hall, started to break bread next Lord's Day in another hall, and when the four and those with them, 19 in all, came to the usual hall they found it locked--they were shut out. Both parties wrote to the surrounding meetings stating their case and Glanton brethren- the nearest meeting, wrote advising them that in view of the sorrowful division they could not at present recognise either party, and beseeching them to get before the Lord about it and seek reconciliation with ~~with~~ each other; and in this action Glanton had the support of all the neighbouring meetings.

From that time various attempts were made by one and another to bring the parties together, and as all felt that the notice read on January 1 was a party, and not an assembly act, and thus void; it was urged on those who signed it that it should be withdrawn. This was refused by the fifteen party: some of them maintaining that the notice was irrevocable and binding but six of them later acknowledged their mistake and withdrew from those who maintained it, and as a consequence of the reduced number this party ceased breaking bread early in 1906. The nineteen party had previously ceased holding any meetings either for prayer or reading in order to avoid any semblance of a party attitude--they had never broken bread. Thus the meeting at Alnwick was completely broken up.

In the meantime some in fellowship in other meetings had gone to Alnwick to live, and as they found no meeting to which they could attach themselves, they went over to Glanton on Lord's Days and broke bread there. Later most of the nineteen party with the six who had left the fifteen party, went to Glanton on Lord's Days and sat behind in the meeting there. In 1907 some of those asked the Glanton brethren to be allowed to break bread there, but the brethren at Glanton felt that a serious responsibility had now devolved upon them. Desiring to act in unison with their brethren in Northumberland they invited representatives from all the surrounding meetings to consider matters at Alnwick. All present at that meeting which was a fairly representative one, expressed confidence in Glanton or any other meeting, which after careful enquiry ~~and being~~



and being satisfied as to moral state, decided to receive individuals applying to them. As a consequence of their enquiries, three were received in May, eight in September, and one a month later and two or three who had left the district were received in other meetings. This was done in Assembly as gathered to the Lord, and as they believed with His sanction and approval, and also as fully convinced that the break-up in Alnwick was complete, and that there was nothing there which the Lord could recognise. They also had in view the resumption of the breaking of bread in Alnwick, which was done in January 1908 with the fellowship of Glanton and the northern meetings generally. This meeting was now composed of twenty one of the original Alnwick meeting and nine who had gone to live there meanwhile, and who had been breaking bread at Glanton while living in Alnwick. They sought then to make an attempt at reconciliation with the other party but as they still held up the notice of January 1 against them, they found it impossible.

Towards the end of 1907 an agitation against the action of Glanton in receiving these repentant Saints was commenced and a few brethren in two meetings in Northumberland "stood aside" as a protest; mostly relatives of friends of those who still maintained the notice. Then the matter became more wide spread and brethren all over England began to look into matters, and various labouring brethren went to Glanton to investigate. They all acknowledged Glanton's piety and grace and that in acting as they did, the brethren there believed that they had the Lord's mind in what was done, also that they accepted the principle of local responsibility but differed only in its application to the present case. But the agitation went on until in July 1908 a number of Saints in Edinburgh "stood aside" in protest against Glanton's action and immediately after broke bread together thus making Glanton's action a test of fellowship. A month later a sister was commended to London, from this meeting, and London brethren decided to fellowship the new meeting at Edinburgh, and thus they cut off Glanton and all those who could not see with them that Glanton had transgressed Scriptural principles. This decision was not unanimous by any means and a number of brethren in London refused their action and continued to fellowship Glanton.

It may be stated here that the brother who maintained the notice of January 1, 1905 wrote to a leading brother in London on Feb 2, 1908 "If you think the withdrawal of the document would accomplish a godly settlement we have no hesitation in doing so", and on March 15 sent a withdrawal notice to certain Northumbrian Meetings. He did not however send one to the four brothers who were the subjects of the "discipline," and it was felt by most in Northumberland that as it expressed no regrets for having been maintained for three years, in spite of the earnest entreaties of many for its withdrawal, it had not the appearance of being an honest desire to get right with those brethren, but rather to give no occasion to the London brethren, who also had condemned it, to refuse him.

The London judgment of August 1908 is that they refused fellowship with the saints in Glanton on the ground that "they have dishonoured Christ by usurping His authority, and entrenching on His prerogative, thus working confusion among saints". In December the seceders meeting at Newcastle-On-Tyne agreed to acknowledge the meeting of the other seven at Alnwick, who had again commenced to break bread and London immediately agreed to that which they had done. It is difficult to see just where Glanton failed and where Christ was dishonoured by their act. It is certain that they shepherded the Sheep of Christ when the enemy was trying to scatter them, and this commends itself as of God. Some say they never should have received any from Alnwick, and others that before resuming the breaking of bread in Alnwick they should have sought reconciliation with the others, instead of doing so after they started breaking bread. They seem to forget that the brother chiefly responsible for formulating the notice of Jan 1, 1905 still maintained his grossly unscriptural act, in spite of protests from every quarter. But be it so, one cannot see any scriptural or godly reason for cutting off Glanton, even if one admits that technically they were wrong in receiving them. One is therefore obliged to look deeper than the surface for the real reason of this division and it is not really hard to find.

The fact is that since 1890 division there had been amongst numbers of the brethren a feeling of anxiety concerning the teaching of certain others. The leaders of a certain school of teaching that had been devel-

oping were using expressions that alarmed many and caused considerable exercise as to where we were drifting. It seemed to many as it they were making the Church of more importance than the Lord Jesus Himself on the one hand, and, & expressions concerning the true humanity, and the eternal relationship of the Son with the Father, seemed derogatory to the Glory of His Person on the other-- exalting the Church and disparaging Himself. Here are a few of the expressions:-

The Gospel is an explanation of what is down here.  
Until the House of God was here in the Spirit there was nothing to preach about.  
For all who have received the Spirit since the day of Pentecost the believer is the source of supply.  
To say that spiritual blessings are in Christ to the exclusion of the Church is mischievous  
Salvation is found in the Church and nowhere else.  
Gods intervention is in the Church.  
Christ is beyond the reach of anyone except in the Church.  
The Promises of God are established in the Church.  
The Lord Jesus is not "eternally" the Son.  
The Lord Jesus is not "eternally" the Word.  
"The Son" and "The Word" are only names taken in connection with the revelation and have no meaning in absolute Deity.  
That Scripture does not say He had a human spirit; His Spirit is Himself.

One need not wonder then at many capable brethren objecting to such teaching but the sad part of it is that such, together with many capable Evangelists among us were "marked" men by those who cultivated this line of teaching. Here then is the crux of the matter--most of these "marked men" could not see that Glanton had done anything to warrant their being cut off and consequently there were supporting Glanton, and an easy way to get rid of all these "undesirables" was simply to refuse Glanton and it was done. Do not think this is imagination, for one of the leading London brethren is reported in J.S.O's paper on the Glanton question to have written in March 1908 as follows:-

"None of us have any real difficulty as to Glanton knowing they acted in the fear of the Lord. What was desired, and what was accomplished by accusing Glanton of dishonouring Christ, by usurping His authority and entrenching on His prerogative was a re-adjustment of our fellowship..... a select circle was to be formed after weeding out the undesirables".

And so after all Glanton was but the occasion and not the real cause of the division. But look at the cost! For further information as to the teaching see "Modern Mystical Teaching and the Word of God. F.B.Hole.

In 1920 there was a further secession from the London party. Mr. J.S. Giles who had while in Sydney been rather active in opposing Glanton's action in 1908 found matters of teaching becoming so serious that he with others were practically forced out after 40 years fellowship with them. In his printed letter setting out his reasons for withdrawing from them he mentions the following:-

The fellowship with which I have been identified has assumed a sectarian and narrow character which I judge is not of God. There is no longer any room amongst these dear brethren to minister that which one believes to be the Truth of God unless one agrees with certain leaders.  
With many it is not "What saith the Lord in the Holy Scriptures" but what is the thought of some noted teachers.  
He is spoken of as "the man" "the voice" and his ministry as "the ministry" which should not be called in question.  
One brother was not charged with unsound views, or of being morally wrong, but that he differed from J.T. the test was J.T. and not Christ and the Truth.  
The unsound views advanced by different ones, the pamphlet by J.D. are left unjudged as far as we know.

Another brother giving his reasons for leaving at the same time, mentions the following among others; "Man worship" "Party Spirit" "Assumption"

and "bad teaching"; He explains these as follows:-

- Man worship is the thrusting up into a special place of a Servant of the Lord, and hanging on his word to the exclusion of others. It has a certain halo of glory connected with it and thus the Lord's glory is obscured.
- Party spirit, If one does not belong to, or have sympathy with the party, one is just an outsider--no fellowship for such in the general circle of these brethren.
- Assumption. This claim to have "the Testimony" "the ministry" is a fulfilling of Rev. 3.17 rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing.
- Bad Teaching. In breaking bread we commit ourselves, and the Lord commits Himself to us. To apply 2 Timothy 2 to assembly discipline weakens 1 Corinthians 5 and also takes the keen edge from the individual instruction of 2 Tim 2 (i.e. to withdraw from, instead of put away). That the brother who breaks the bread opens the door for the Lord to come in, just as if the Lord of Glory could not give His presence without the breaking of bread. This is only another effort of the enemy to nullify the truth of the Lord's presence in the midst.

This brother states that at a meeting of brothers in the town in which he lived, it became a question of subscribing to the so-called peace, and other teaching of J.T. or leaving the fellowship and without hesitation he chose the latter course rather than give up a good conscience. So these two brothers learnt ten years later what many of us learnt in Sydney in 1910 that it was a question of agreeing with all that was said or done by the leaders, or getting out. Some 20 to 25 meetings went with them. For further information as to the teaching see "recent teaching and its effects" by J.S.Giles.

In the present year 1931 we have in Sydney meetings representative of all these various sections of brethren both open or exclusive, except the Stuart and Grant parties. What a testimony to the self-will of man in the things of God. Of course I shall be told by all of them that WE are right--the only difference being that some lay more emphasis on the WE than others. The confusion is appalling, and those believers in the systems around, who are exercised as to their pathway and associations and seeking guidance of the Lord as to where and with whom they should walk find it very difficult. It behoves those who are connected with the various meetings of brethren then to humbly own our common shame and seek to walk in the Spirit of the Master, Who would have us while walking in a pathway apart from all that is displeasing to Himself, do so in a spirit of love towards all the Saints, and seeking the good and blessing of all. After all, amid the "shadows of our shame" we have been able to see "glints of His glory". The truth has been maintained and error refused, and that is what we should be set for while left down here.

In conclusion let me briefly state what should be looked for in a fellowship according to God in the present day-- a fellowship where the truth of God is maintained and where we are free from sectarian principles or practice. I quote from another.

Association-- As to reception and discipline we refuse such principles as leave the door open to evil; thus seeking to preserve the sanctity of God's House.

Congregationalism--Which makes assemblies independent of each other we refuse, as it practically denies the unity of the Body of Christ, reducing the corporate testimony to that of the mere local assembly, or even to that of the individual.

Ecclesiasticism. Which unduly exalts assembly action we should guard against. We acknowledge the Lord's authority by His Word to which the assembly as well as the individual is to be subject.

Liberty of Ministry- We recognise both within and without the assembly, while fellowship and counsel as to it should be regarded, since we are members one of

another.

We are living in the perilous times of the last days characterised by Laodicean lukewarmness and indifference and the tendency always is to give up the truth. May my reader be found amongst those who-- however feebly-- are seeking to maintain it. The Lord will support all such.

*W. J. Rule*