

7, Mount Park Crescent,
Baling W.

21 Feb. 1907.

My dear Brother.

Mr. Mills having let me see your letter to him giving an account of what took place last Lord's day at York Road, Tunbridge Wells, which fills me with sorrow. I feel constrained to lay before you a succession of facts with most of which you are well acquainted or have the means of verifying by two or three witnesses. Can the brothers who express their agreement with Mr. Sibthorpe's statement have any idea of the solemn responsibility they have incurred in contravening their express "decision" of October 16th 1903, as made known in their circular letter of 20th November following?

In that circular letter, a charge was made against Mr. Strange that he "asked Mr. Bushell to spread another Table," thus setting aside the assembly at Tunbridge Wells. This charge, made, as has been proved, on the authority of a single witness, and therefore in disobedience to the word of God, Leut XLX,15, was as you know, owned by Mr. Bushell himself in May, '05 to be incorrect (which he confirmed even in writing, according to your letter to Mr. Mills of 16th Aug. 1905), by which it appears that the words used by Mr. Strange, ^{were} ~~were~~ simply to ask Mr. Bushell whether he was prepared to stand with Mr. Strange, and that Mr. Bushell then denied that he had been asked "to spread another Table". The charge arose from a misunderstanding, and yet it remains unconfirmed and unwithdrawn to this day.

Having had occasion to meet Mr. Sibthorpe about a year after this by the invitation of a brother as to another matter, I took the opportunity of calling his attention to these facts and on the following day (16th May 1906) was led to write Mr. Sibthorpe a further entreaty that he and the other brethren should frankly own what is clearly proved to

be haste and error in dealing with these things. In his answer, dated 22d May '06, Mr. Sibthorpe, while thanking me for the letter, refused to enter into any further correspondence on the subject.

As a subsequent interview, six months later, I find him equally resolute.

What is to be said of such a line of conduct? Is an unfounded accusation to be allowed to stand for nearly three years and a half against a brother, without any effort to have so simple a matter cleared up and a suitable reparation made? Is it thus that we show, as brethren, that we love one another and seek to glorify our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ who loved us and gave Himself for us? Let us not forget our Lord's words in Matthew 18, closing the solemn parable of the two "debtors".

But there is another painful feature in this course of Mr. Sibthorpe's.

On July 30, 1905, after having long abstained from going to Tunbridge Wells on Lord's day morning, on account of the feeling displayed there, Mr. Strange, acting on the repeated recommendation of brethren (myself amongst the number), went to the meeting at York Road, maintained silence and left early; after which Mr. Sibthorpe read Acts II, 42, and remarked to the following effect, "you will see by this that this assembly can have no fellowship with Mr. Strange coming here to break bread this morning." Several were surprised and could not understand the discrepancy with the "decision" read out in the gathering, on the Sunday morning following Friday 16th October 1903. There was of course no opportunity for enquiring whether or not this was the mind of "the assembly"

On 22d September '05, Mr. Devine, at or after a visit to Mr. Sibthorpe with the earnest desire to bring all these sorrows to a righteous and friendly termination, obtained from him a short typewritten statement, undated and unsigned, to the effect that "the assembly" at

T. Wells had no fellowship with Mr. Strange in his breaking bread there. This clandestine document was shown to several brothers gathered four days later in answer to Mr. Devine's appeal, one of them remarking that by such an act, Mr. Sibthorpe put himself out of fellowship.

Consequently, Mr. Sibthorpe's action of last Lord's day morning (17th inst) on the occasion of a further attempt of Mr. Strange's to show that he bowed to the "decision" of October 1903, in spite of all that had occurred, is a repetition for the third time of his (Mr. Sibthorpe's) unwarranted and unscriptural assumption to represent the entire assembly without any previous attempt to arrive at an "assembly judgment." Most mercifully to us all, God did not allow this to pass unchallenged, as your letter shows, while affording Mr. Strange an opportunity for showing practically, to his own cost, that he desired to avoid confusion in the meeting, and to be reconciled to his brethren with whom he is locally associated.

To make use then of Mr. Sibthorpe's own words, I ask you, dear brother, who are these who have acted "in selfwill" and disregarded the consciences of their brethren? Is there not in the meeting unconfessed sin of three and a half year's standing, the name of "the assembly" being used to cover it up? Can such an "assembly" be said to be gathered in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ? Is it characterized by ready obedience to the word of the Lord, and that faith which works by love? Does the assembly as a whole accept the solemn responsibility of endorsing Mr. Sibthorpe's actions?

As he has repeatedly said that he will listen to no brother, who does not in the first place endorse the decision of October 16, '03,--- which he himself has set aside in its main proviso,---all I can suggest is that you should carefully verify the statements above made, and, if you find them correct, submit them to every one in the gathering that their

consciences may be duly exercised in the Lord's presence.

Looking to Him to guide in this painful matter, I remain,

Dear Brother, Affectly yours in Him,

W. J. Lowe.

Mr. H. A. Harborow.