

# To the Saints Gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus.

BERLIN, *April*, 1892.

BELOVED BRETHREN IN THE LORD,

To our great sorrow we are obliged to inform you of things which have occurred in our midst, and which have led to a most lamentable division in the gathering here. We would rather avoid this public way of communication; indeed we would rather be silent altogether, and mourn in silence before the Lord, and sorrow over the breach which has been made with a rude hand, and over the dishonour done to His holy Name, if you had not already received from the other side a printed communication which in a most incorrect and inaccurate way gives an account of what has happened.

We would mention, first of all, that last year the brothers here repeatedly looked minutely into Mr. Raven's doctrines, and arrived at the conviction that the judgment of brothers gathered together in November, 1890, and March, 1891, from Germany, Holland, Belgium, and Switzerland, concerning the evil of these doctrines, was perfectly right, and that the decision of the assembly at Bexhill (England), to separate from those doctrines, and all those who upheld and defended them, was decidedly to be recognised.

But on Lord's Day, 3rd of April of this year, two brothers from our midst, F. Hilliges and J. Groth, after the meeting was over, informed the brethren that Mr. Chater, from England (an English brother, well known by many of you, and a zealous defender of Raven's doctrines, and who for a long time now has been going about the European Continent trying to disturb the assemblies), was in Berlin, and wished to preach the gospel in the afternoon, if there was no objection on the part of the

assembly. Upon this announcement, which fell like a bomb-shell into the midst of the assembly, as only a few brothers had accidentally come to know of Mr. Chater's presence in Berlin, several brothers reminded the saints of the judgment come to last year, and said that we had separated from Mr. Chater, and must therefore decline his ministry, as a matter of course. Those two brothers thereupon declared that the decision referred to had been arrived at precipitately, without fully examining Raven's doctrines, that much was based on calumnies and mere disputes of words, and that Mr. Chater was ready to enlighten them and to clear himself, or rather Mr. Raven. At this point one of us began to read aloud a letter, in which we were expressly warned by brother R. Brockhaus, in Elberfeld, in the name of the elder brothers there, not to have any intercourse with Mr. Chater, he having caused much disturbance and occasion for stumbling in several gatherings in France, and as having come to do the same in Germany. This letter was pronounced not worth noticing by brothers Hilliges and Groth, as only conveying the judgment of a young brother. In short, those two brothers would not allow any one to say anything more, and at last we left, unhappy and with heavy hearts.

In the afternoon F. Hilliges and J. Groth, in spite of our decided protest against it in the morning, brought Mr. Chater to the meeting, and at the close requested the brethren to remain, and see for themselves that Mr. Chater was still the same dear brother as in former years, and did not hold heresy. Upon this most of the brethren left the room, only a small number remaining to listen to Mr. Chater.

When we saw that the two brothers were determined to have their own way, and to introduce Mr. Chater, and with him Mr. Raven's evil doctrines, into the assembly, we sent a request to some labouring brethren to support us in the struggle which

must of necessity begin. We thought we ought to do this all the more, as we had the distinct sense that it was a most serious matter, which concerned the *whole* assembly of God. Upon this the two brothers, C. and R. Brockhaus, came here on Tuesday, the 5th of April.

In the evening, after the prayer meeting, the brothers as usual remained behind to talk over the affairs of the gathering, and we now sought, with the help of the two brothers Brockhaus, to convict F. Hilliges and J. Groth of their self-willed way of acting, and to show them how completely they had slighted the judgment and the decision of their brethren, to which they had fully agreed at the time, in bringing forcibly into the meeting—first of all *without the knowledge*, and then *against the desire* of the rest of their brethren—a man who had been declared out of fellowship by the assembly as a defender of false doctrines. But all our efforts were in vain, F. Hilliges declaring that for him *the judgment referred to was of no importance*.

As some in our midst wished to have Raven's doctrines once more gone over in common, in order that anyone who in any way might be troubled about the matter, might be better able to see for himself that in fact a decided separation from them was, and is, imperative, we invited on Wednesday *all* the brothers (also those who had already put themselves into connection with Mr. Chater), to meet in the house of our brother Zschernack. About 30 to 35 brothers acted upon the invitation; but F. Hilliges and J. Groth, with a few others who from the beginning had set themselves on their side, met together, as we afterwards learned, the same evening and at the same hour, and *in conjunction with Mr. Chater*, at the house of Mr. J. Groth.

We were deeply grieved at the more and more distinct

and undisguised evidence of a party spirit at work, and which regardless of the welfare of the assembly, and without consideration for the consciences of the brethren, was pursuing its aim obdurately against all exhortation. We saw that nothing remained but to invite the whole gathering to a meeting, in order to lay this sorrowful matter together before the Lord, and to talk it over, looking up to Him.

On Thursday evening, April 7th, after the usual reading meeting, all the brethren were asked to come together the following evening for the aforesaid purpose. After this, brother R—, who from the beginning had identified himself with Hilliges and Groth, asked the brothers to remain behind. This was done. After the sisters had gone, Hilliges declared that for some time two parties had existed in the gathering, this had already shown itself before, and had now again become apparent consequent upon Mr. Chater's visit, some brothers having assembled on the previous evening at Zschernack's, and some at Groth's. When C. Brockhaus, in answer to this, wished to remark that it was impossible to talk about *two* parties, as *all* brothers had been invited the evening before to the house of brother Zschernack. F. Hilliges replied that brother C. Brockhaus was not a local brother, although one whom he personally loved and esteemed, with whom also he had been intimately connected many years, but who had not to interfere in the affairs of the assembly at Berlin. The *assembly* did not wish him to speak. When, upon this, some of us remarked that we did wish him to speak and that those who opposed it should stand up, he said it did not matter how large or how small the number of the latter were, the *assembly* (viz., he, Groth, and 4 or 5 other brothers) did not wish brother Brockhaus to speak, *we* were a party, and that party had invited brother Brockhaus, and the wishes of a party were not to

be regarded. When a movement arose, and some brothers stood up to say something, he threatened to have the room cleared at once. This threat he repeated several times. The Lord graciously enabled all the brothers to remain quiet, in spite of this unfeeling behaviour.

After F. Hilliges had once more declared Raven's doctrines perfectly harmless, and that according to Chater's testimony, a difference of opinion existed between individual brothers, concerning only a few unimportant points, he continued, saying that the "*assembly*" (that is to say, himself and the few brothers who the evening before had met at brother J. Groth's) had decided to come together next Sunday, as usual, in this room, for the breaking of bread, and *that in fellowship with Mr. Chater, and in connection with the English meetings from whom they had unrighteously separated.* All the brethren were invited to take part in it, and anyone not agreeing with this decision *might leave.* As to the room, *that belonged to him, seeing the rent had not been paid on the 3rd of April,* and according to the local rules for house property in Berlin, an agreement became invalid if the rent for the current month had not been paid on the 3rd.

We could hardly believe our ears when we heard these words. One of us reminded Hilliges that the agreement was *by the year,* and that for the last seven years, since they had had the room, the rent had perhaps never been paid on the 3rd, but always later, as it happened to suit, so that he, as he had never objected to this way of being paid, even legally had no right to act in this inconsiderate and violent manner. Another brother tried to reach his conscience by a few solemn words, but all was in vain; he was determined to carry out his wicked will. When brother C. Brockhaus finally reminded him once more that through his action he totally despised the judgment

of the brethren, and the above-mentioned decision, his only answer was a smile. The pointing out also that his manner of dealing was an act of the greatest injustice and violence, and that God would visit him for it, made no impression. There remained, therefore, nothing for us but to yield to violence and leave the room. While we were leaving, F. Hilliges once more announced loudly the so-called "decision of the assembly," with regard to the breaking of bread on the following Lord's Day, and invited all to come. We were deeply moved. "How is it possible," we asked ourselves again and again, "that the assembly of God should be simply turned into the street, and that by a *brother*!"

This is all the more painful, as we are obliged to say, and to acknowledge thankfully, that this brother at one time ministered to the saints with much blessing, although, at the same time, we cannot withhold the fact that for a long time past a root of bitterness had sprung up in his heart, and that he was no longer bound up with his brethren in sincere, unfeigned affection. This has been manifested again and again, and is confirmed by his own words, that for some time two parties had existed in the meeting.

The Lord, to whom we had turned for refuge, granted us to find a new room the very next day (Ackerstrasse 49, II. Hof). When we met there for the first time, on the 10th April, to announce the death of our Saviour, there was much weeping and mourning. Alas! we all felt how deeply the heart of our beloved Master, the Head of His Church, was wounded, how much His Name had been dishonoured and His testimony enfeebled, not to mention the incalculable mischief done to simple, unestablished souls, by such sad occurrences. *In our* midst, self-will, violence, and lawlessness had shown themselves; one *among us* had relentlessly made a deep breach,

and others from among *our* midst had followed him in his sad course. *Ours* the shame, the humiliation, and the mourning. At the same time we had, and have, cause to thank the Lord that He gave grace to by far the greater number of the brethren to discern the intention of the enemy, whose delight it is to break up and destroy, so that they were able to resist the evil, and firmly and quietly persevere in the truth. Our supplication to Him is that He would keep us all in faithfulness to Himself and His truth, establish the wavering ones, and bring back those who have gone astray.

In putting before our brethren a truthful presentation of the sad events as they happened here within the last two or three weeks (being forced to do this by the circular of the brothers who have separated from us), we confidently leave to every upright conscience to judge of it, as well as of the letter of F. Hilliges and J. Groth. The enemy will do all in his power in other places also to cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which we have learned, and by good words and fair speeches to deceive the hearts of the simple. (Compare Rom. xvi. 17-18). May the Lord give grace, therefore, to His beloved people to "turn away" with all decision from those who allow themselves to be used by the enemy to fulfil his wicked intentions! Only thus shall we be preserved from the snare of the fowler. "I come quickly; hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." (Rev. iii. 11).

One short remark in closing, as regards "Accusations and Replies," by Mr. Chater, which you will have received, together with the letter from F. Hilliges, J. Groth, &c. We have indeed been struck in many instances with Mr. Chater's adroitness in avoiding the gist of the matter, as well as with the subtilty with which in others he knows how to twist and explain away Raven's words. But, we ask, where is "the

simplicity as to the Christ"? where, the "holding fast the outline of sound words"? where, the speech which "ministers grace to those that hear it"? (2 Cor. xi. 3; 2 Tim. i. 13; Eph. iv. 29). "If anyone teach differently, and do not accede to *sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and the teaching which is according to piety, he is . . . . sick about questions and disputes of words." (1 Tim. vi. 3-4).

As regards the feature which perhaps strikes many brethren, that Mr. Raven now and then seems really to say the opposite of what he is charged with, we would like to remind them of what was said on page 5 of the brethren's circular letter from Elberfeld—"Mr. Raven's friends are indeed trying to prove from other letters and writings of his that concerning the tenets which have been called in question, he was not only thoroughly sound, but teaching precious truths. They bring extracts which seem to state the very opposite of the above quotations. But as long as these latter, and the doctrines contained in them, are not *acknowledged and withdrawn in a clear and distinct manner as evil*, we judge such endeavours to be merely clever attempts of the enemy *to cover up the evil and to blind the eyes of the saints.*"

*"The persuasibleness is not of Him that calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. I have confidence as to you in the Lord that ye will have no other mind; and he that is troubling you shall bear the guilt of it, whosoever he may be."* (New Trans. Gal. v. 8-10).

In the name of the assembly in Berlin,

H. HANDTKE,	A. KUSKE,
E. HOMUTH,	J. SCHILLER,
FR. KORB,	FR. ZSCHERNACK.