

PLAINFIELD, *July 12th*, 1892.

To the Brethren in the Lord whom it concerns:
Greeting.

In response to the call sent forth to brethren to assemble here to consider the questions in connection with our relation to (so-called) "open" brethren, a large number came together. We would thankfully recognize the Lord's grace in enabling us to feel our dependence upon as well as our responsibility to Him, with love also to those that are His people. Several days were devoted to the consideration of the matter from all sides, and free expression of judgment was given. The following conclusions were accepted with great unanimity, for which we give thanks to God.

As to their condition, proofs were given that there is no present association with evil doctrine, and this both from those amongst them and others outside. An authoritative circular from leaders amongst them in this country, agrees with the testimony of some well acquainted with them at Bethesda, Bristol, England, as well as elsewhere, that this is the case.

The "Letter of the Ten" has been, from the time when it was put forth to the present, a main hindrance to communion. In this it was stated that, supposing a teacher "were fundamentally heretical, this would 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." It is, however, stated by the leaders in Bethesda, "We do not mean that any would be allowed to return to a heretical teacher. He would become subject to discipline by doing so. Our practice proves this. We had no thought of intercommunion with persons coming from a heretical teacher when that sentence was written."

In the same way Mr. Wright's letter, at a much more recent date, affirming upon the face of it the same principle with the "letter of the ten," has been explained not to mean intercommunion.

We dare not say that we accept these statements as really satisfactory; and there are still others, as in E. K. Groves' more recent book ("Bethesda Family Matters," p. 133), which show, to our sorrow, that all among them are not yet clear. Yet the late statement from leaders in this country, accepted by those in Bethesda itself, together with the testimony from all sides as to their actual present condition and practice necessitate our acceptance of the conclusion, in the "love that thinketh no evil," that looseness in this respect does not now exist. There are doubtless gatherings still "open" in this unhappy way, but from these we have every reason to believe that the brethren to whom we refer are really separate. In this belief, which it is a joy to be permitted to entertain, we

shall be able to welcome them among us, as we do other Christians.

We only regret to have to express our inability to go further; the insistence upon certain views of baptism hindering the liberty of the Spirit in ministry, and which becomes thus, in our judgment, a grave evil; questions also as to the past still remaining, with other matters of real importance, compel us, at present, to stop here. But we are thankful to be able to go thus far, and to show our sincere desire to take all hindrances to genuine Christian fellowship out of the way, as far as we can justly do it.

‘In conclusion, we feel for ourselves the necessity of much prayer and patience, and great respect for one another’s consciences, that these desires for unity may not be used by the enemy to foster further division. “Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.” (Phil. iii. 16.) “Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.” (Rom xiv. 19.)

B. C. GREENMAN.

SAMUEL RIDOUT.

F. W. GRANT.

And others.