

*Present*  
*Day*  
*Mistakes*

By A. E. B.



## PRESENT DAY MISTAKES

Beloved Brethren:—

For months I have refrained from taking up my pen concerning our present exercises in the different Assemblies. I had hoped that those taking the lead in this new movement might see the advisability of reconsidering their course, but letters from different places have come to me expressing bewilderment and distress, and information also that there is increased activity in sowing the seeds of independency throughout the gatherings; that to refrain longer would seem to be shirking a duty, if not unfaithful to a trust.

The first feature in this movement has been disregard for the consciences of those with whom we have walked in the past, and independency of action has been so quickly adopted, advocated and practiced, so different to what we have ever known before.

It is a departure from all our past teaching and practice, and also what we believe to be the teaching of the entire New Testament Scriptures. Then, added to this, forgetfulness so soon, if not ignoring, the ministry of most of our departed leaders—men so prominent among us only a few years ago, loved and respected—such as F. W. Grant, P. J. Loizeaux, T. O. Loizeaux, B. C. Greenman, C. Crain, etc., etc.

Mr. R. Mushet has reprinted an extract from a pamphlet called "A Divine Movement," by F. W. Grant. We hope that each reader who has not now a copy of the pamphlet itself will procure one from Loizeaux Bros., New York, and if it is carefully read

side by side with Mr. Dorman's papers recently sent forth, thoughtful and unbiased minds will easily see where the truth is concerning the question now at issue.

We feel compelled for the sake of truth in the present, and that the brethren might see clearly what was the teaching of others in the past, who have been recently taken from us, to **also reprint in separate pamphlet** now, two papers from the pen of B. C. Greenman and one from the pen of C. Crain. Those men labored by oral ministry and by pen; they now rest from their labors, but how soon they and their teaching have been forgotten and their printed ministry shelved! In striking contrast to all this are the words of Heb. 13:7.

The present principles advocated, compared with our past oral and printed ministry, is a sad departure. The great question now for each of us to consider prayerfully is: Will we continue as in the past to practice the unity of the Assemblies, or shall we adopt independency of Assemblies, so that in government and discipline our gatherings shall be disconnected, disjointed and independent of one another? We might state here concerning the statement made of recent date that "the Assemblies are not said in Scripture to be **members** of one another; that is true only of individuals," this statement is not new—not recently discerned. I heard this at the time I left O. B., now fifty-three years ago.

And thirty-five years ago when a similar movement was being agitated, one who left us said to me, "The Assemblies are not **members** of one another." I replied, "Not in so many words, but do not forget that the New Testament teaches us that **the Assemblies are one**, so you do not need to add the word 'members.' " The Church—the body of Christ—

is one. No matter how many Assemblies may be scattered, it is distance only that separates them. Their relationship by the Spirit is one. Nothing can be nearer or closer. Then, to be consistent with that God ordained and established relationship, their practice, their fellowship, their order, their government, of a necessity should ever be one. In all this where does independency come in, when saints are gathered consistent with the Pauline teaching?

Independency, in contrast with the God appointed unity of saints and Assemblies, is discovered in its beginning when Paul wrote his last epistle to Timothy, "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me." (2 Tim. 1:15). So, step by step, stage by stage, the departure has continued ever since.

In the movement begun about one hundred years ago called "Brethren," the discovery of the truth of the one body was present in power. Hundreds and thousands of Assemblies scattered throughout the whole world owned this oneness of relationship, and also its order, government and fellowship.

Independency followed in that circle later in Bethesda, Bristol\*, and it is bearing its fruit in independency of Assemblies to this day. Let us, one and all, be warned. We are left here to bear witness **for Christ and His truth**. Let us not neglect the Gospel to all the world, and let us not overlook the great truth of what belongs to the Church. We cannot follow the whole Church today under present conditions, but we ever should love the whole

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\* The whole case of Plymouth and Bethesda. By W. Trotter.

Church, and we are expected to follow **the Church teaching left us**, and in this only are we safe and proper in Church testimony.

At this juncture let me say we should look further back—beyond those present exercises—to the conditions that have come in among us with the newer generation who have not known former conditions when a spirituality and heavenly mindedness were present. Our prayer now to God is, “Lord, restore that which has been lost,” so that we may discern clearly the old paths, the good way, and walk therein. Then, individually and in the Assemblies, all of us may afresh manifest before the whole Church and the whole world, the heavenly character of a people linked with Christ our Lord in heaven.

Accept, dearly beloved Brethren, the feeble word herein offered concerning those heart exercises, in the spirit in which each word has been penned.

Affectionately,

A. E. B.

## THE PRESENT MISTAKE

Those for whom I pen these lines will understand when I say, we have passed through deep sorrows for some three years or more, and before we have been able to properly recover and apply ourselves to better and happier work than conflict within our gates—work such as carrying the Gospel to needy people all around and helping God's people that need the truth that we have been favored with . . .

We have now thrust upon us a further exercise not expected and in an unlooked for way. We are convinced that the features of this new movement greatly lack the pastoral care of the Good Shepherd for His flock. We would rather have looked for a tender consideration for a tried and afflicted people with whom we have walked. Great are the present responsibilities that rest upon those who are leading the movement that bewilders and distresses those already weary of strife, and the guilt is the more grave because appeal after appeal was made that no such steps be taken in haste by individuals or local gatherings without first a conference be called of representative brethren, so that we might seek the Lord's mind together and seek to preserve the unity of the Spirit in a uniting bond of peace. But we add with deepest regret, those appeals were disregarded.

The mistake made a few years ago in Philadelphia was spreading throughout all of our Assemblies what was purely a local matter, thus introducing confusion and asking Assemblies at a distance to decide matters which no Assembly was compe-

tent to judge—things that should have been adjusted in Philadelphia alone.

Now, we observe another mistake on the opposite side: A few individuals here and there, and some of little experience, have decided the question that concerns our whole fellowship and have begun to practice before first conferring with representatives of all our Assemblies, and by this act have begun independency of action, such independency as we have not believed to be Scriptural, nor have we practiced it in the past.

And added to this, it is expected that all of the Assemblies will follow this new ruling even before being consulted. To follow such a course would mean that many would be compelled to pocket a good conscience and surrender a judgment which they have believed was formed by Holy Scripture. The Apostle would not for a moment ask the Church at Corinth to do such. "Not for that we have dominion (lordship or rule) over your faith, but are helpers of your joy; **for by faith ye stand,**" (2 Cor. 1:24).

Those who lead in this movement advocate, practice and press upon the Assemblies intercommunion, and also, amalgamation with so-called Independent O. B. This is a new course that hitherto we have not recognized as according to Scripture, and such a change we do not believe should be adopted lightly or hastily. We believe the promptings of the Holy Spirit would have been that we prayerfully confer together, then seek to preserve the unity of the Spirit.

In all corporate exercises **counsel** should first be sought from the Lord in prayer. This was neglected

in Israel's day regarding the Gibeonites, and they suffered as a consequence (Joshua 9:3-27). And it is well for us to remember that our Lord yet remains Head of the Church, and although the Church has drifted from the first teaching and order, yet the teaching given by Him ever abides for devoted saints, and it remains for us now to search that word the more prayerfully, so that we may acquire the mind and will of the Lord, and as a safeguard we should ever take **counsel** and confer with each other. **Counsel** and **conference** thus is intended to preserve us from self-sufficient independency of action, and safeguard us from extremes. (2 Cor. 3:5).

In every sphere of life it has been recognized that before any great enterprise be undertaken, "advice," "counsel," is of first importance; and in the relationship of which we form part as members of one body, no one can say to another, "I have no need of thee."

We will ask each reader to consider a few passages so that we may be instructed and admonished again by what God has been pleased to write for our guidance:

(1) "Without counsel the people fall; but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety" (Pro. 11:14).

(2) "Without counsel purposes are disappointed; but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety" (Pro. 15:22).

(3) "Every purpose is established by counsel; and with good advice make war" (Pro. 20:18).

(4) "For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war; but in multitude of counsellors there is safety" (Pro. 24:6).



And added to this, see the reference the Lord when on earth made with regard to the importance of counsel in matters relating to the great projects in life (Luke 14:28-33).

In our present exercises we observe the more need for counsel because the subject concerns our whole Assembly fellowship throughout the world.

It also in a special way concerns all servants of Christ who have been in recognized service among us, local and general, some who have been Fathers in the Assemblies and who have for years borne the burden and heat of the day.

In adopting such a new course of action, which involves all the gatherings, are not all such entitled to consideration in counsel? They surely were, by the model Apostle, raised up to furnish us with example and teaching for the Church (Eph. 5:21; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:7-17-24).

Further, not only has such a large number been overlooked in the United States and Canada, but in Great Britain where we have a large number of Assemblies with whom it has given us joy in the past few years to cultivate a closer fellowship, and among whom are quite a few gifted and honored servants. In deciding a question such as the present, have we no responsibility to them, or do we mean to discard such for another company with whom we have hitherto not walked?

Brethren who have acted in such an independent way must appear to those across the ocean as fickle and changeable indeed. In past years when such capable and wise men as F. W. G. were with us, and a matter which concerned us all arose, representative brethren were called together for prayer

and counsel, and matters were examined from all angles, and all consciences were respected.

Our present actions are in striking contrast:

A new set of principles has been adopted, advocated and practiced, and all before sitting together as members of one body around the table in sacred and brotherly conference.

And further, when objections have been made to such procedure, the charges have been made, "You show bitterness"; "Are sectarian"; and "Will make division."

My dear Brethren, let me ask by pen, is this fair? Is this just?

If some take exception to what has been done, is it right to hastily attribute such to bitterness, sectarianism, or a desire to foster division?

It will ever be safe to keep distinctly in mind **cause** and **effect**. We are within the bounds of both truth and righteousness when we say the **real cause** of these fresh sorrows have been because a new set of principles, a new course of procedure, have been marked out for our Assemblies, which in the past we have refused.

If a change was judged necessary by some, would not a proper course be to inquire in Christianlike spirit of the rest, and thus carefully examine the whole question, and seek at least earnestly and prayerfully to preserve **unity**, and by all means, if possible, to spare the people of God gathered in so many places, **distraction** of heart and mind and avert the possibility of **division**.

It is now urged upon us that we should seek to "keep the unity of the Spirit" with **other companies**

with whom we have not walked in the past. Our hearts would readily respond to further expansion in Christian fellowship if such were brought to pass properly according to righteousness and truth; and if separated companies could meet together, confer patiently and gather from Scripture a proper basis for communion and fellowship, we would cheerfully say "Amen." But before we begin to follow such a course with others, should we not practice that principle among those with whom we have walked for so many years? Do not our first responsibilities begin with those?

## HISTORY REPEATED

Almost forty years ago a similar agitation arose among us, when a conference was called at Plainfield, N. J. (July, 1892). At that conference Mr. J. H. B., from England, and a few others from this side of the ocean, assured us that O. B. had not only cleared themselves from Newton's heresy, but also largely from independency of Assemblies. We accepted the testimony; and the circular sent forth from that conference was to the effect that now we could receive **individuals** from O. B. meetings the same as from other Christians where fundamental doctrines were not questioned.

But upon further examination we discovered from O. B. writings that they were not clear; and further, there was a misuse by different persons of the intent of the conference decision. This gave exercise in many quarters, so that three different conferences followed.

The first was in New York, May 30, 1893, when a letter was addressed to brethren with us in Great Britain, in which letter there was an acknowledg-

ment made of the mistake in Plainfield, N. J. From that letter we quote: "We also feel that we have allowed ourselves to go too far in fellowshiping certain persons from among them, giving thereby cause for the alarm which some have taken" (New York, June 1, 1893; signed by sixteen brethren).

Then, in Pittsburgh, July 19 to 23, 1894, a conference was held in which the matter was further discussed, followed by one at Dunkirk, N. Y., July 26 to August 2, 1894, when a joint letter was sent forth from which we quote: "We are therefore in honesty bound to say that we were misled by statements made to us at the Plainfield meeting, and that with our present knowledge that circular could not have gone forth. We must therefore repeat that we desire it to be fully and finally understood that we have no fellowship except as they forsake the principles above stated" (signed by eight brethren, Pittsburgh and Dunkirk, July and August, 1894). At that time men of weight and experience guided, such as F. W. G., P. J. L., T. O. L., B. C. G., etc., etc.

Then later of more recent date, July 11 to 19, 1923, a conference was held in Elizabeth, N. J., to consider a reconciliation with brethren (called Glanton). Our decision there was that we should welcome and encourage this reconciliation, for they had admitted the wrong of cutting off both F. W. G. at Montreal, and C. E. S. in England, thus removing the barriers raised between us, and their principles of "Unity of Assemblies" were similar to our own. But at that conference, as we considered our whole fellowship throughout the world, we were confronted with the fact that brethren in Great Britain and New Zealand were not in agreement with us. It was brought to our notice that we had overlooked

taking counsel with them, and thus had acted independently. In our letter sent forth at that time we acknowledged this mistake. We quote: "It has been a great sorrow to know that the gatherings in Great Britain and New Zealand have not felt clearly to acquiesce, due possibly to failure on our part to inform them and to counsel with them."

In this past history twice we acted in haste and independent of brethren elsewhere who had responsibilities as well as ourselves in those questions.

Now, coming down to our own day, we observe the same mistake. Some who lived when the former mistakes were made are yet with us, but largely a new and younger generation who are not acquainted with the past and that never viewed things in the first spirituality and order. The past mistakes were confessed and difficulties adjusted. Shall we now follow the example which those leaders have set us? Shall we now in the present crisis consider our ways?

## A WARNING

We quote an extract from a recent statement by Lord Hugh Cecil, British member of Parliament:

"In many ways we live in an age of disintegration: old things are passing away. There is now a general corroded atmosphere which may end, in not precisely revolution, but general disintegration of society. There is a growing weakness of all moral restrictions and a growing sense that every man may do as he likes."

Those are weighty words uttered by a great statesman, but a keen observer of the trend of times

as seen in the world today. Cannot we observe the same in the professing Church also? And shall we not say the same features are seen, which once we dreaded on the outside, manifest in many of our Assemblies, in the place where **piety** associated with love for the **Word of God**, and love for **prayer**? The world has entered and displays itself there.

We need to be recalled again to the freshness and power of first days, ministry of the Word of God that will bring us **back, back, far back**, and follow afresh; be imitators of that lowly, but par excellent life of Jesus among men, and then the example of the early Church that displayed the graces of his heavenly life in their testimony.

Once more we add, history is repeating itself. The Church of our day reproduces the history of Israel as recorded in the Book of Judges. When Moses and Joshua died, and when the elders that outlived Joshua died—men who were so favored as to walk side by side with those men of might, and who held the nation together as one while they lived—then Israel soon departed from Jehovah, their Savior God; they forgot Him; they departed from the teachings and commands that Moses and Joshua had so emphasized during their lifetime. Then, in that nation, so favored by Jehovah and where the word of Jehovah was once the supreme guide, and where unity and peace were distinct features, their departure brought discord, distress, division, as the whole book relates. "There was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 2:7-23; Judges 3:1-7; Judges 17:6; Judges 21:23).

In this record we get a dark picture, yet when the history is written up afresh in the New Testament by the Holy Spirit (Heb. 11:32), we observe men such as **Gideon**, etc., who had **faith in God** and whom God used to accomplish his own purposes. They were His beacon lights in that dark day. Shall not the lessons of **the failure**, and also of men that found relief by **their faith** in Jehovah, serve to stir us in our time to take hold afresh? For God abides; the truth abides; and His coming is very near at hand.

A. E. B.

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Note—This pamphlet is intended for those in recognized fellowship only and no further use to be made.

It is sent free of charge, extra copies desired will be supplied as long as the edition lasts.

Those, however, who wish to co-operate in the expense may do so by writing to—A. E. B., 815 South Carondelet Street, Los Angeles, California.