

# PLOUGHCROFT LANE MEETING ROOM, BOOTH TOWN, HALIFAX:

A LITTLE INFORMATION AS TO THOSE WHO ASSEMBLE  
THERE.

---



PEOPLE, in passing by the above room, may have noticed the board hanging outside, and, seeing meetings advertised, may have speculated on their nature and the tenets held by those attending them, with the result of arriving at conclusions more frequently erroneous than correct. In the face of the numerous and commodious buildings called churches and chapels by which we are here surrounded, probably it has been thought that those meeting together in such a room must be exceptionally peculiar in their views, or else they would have found a congenial place in one of those large and well-attended buildings. To be thought peculiar, or hard to please, is the penalty in all ages inflicted upon those who hold aloof from popular notions or practices. Singularity is naturally associated with misguidedness by those who go with the stream; and this is often true, though not always, nor in things most momentous. How often singularity has proved correct, and achieved in the end glorious triumphs over opinion almost universal! History, both Biblical and even secular, points to facts confirmatory of this. Noah would be considered an enthusiast by the antediluvian world; Moses must have seemed worse than singular when he chose affliction with Israel instead of position and power as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself we are told that on a certain occasion His kinsmen went out "to lay hold on him; for they said, he is beside himself." The apostles, too, were counted fools by the religious people of their day, who were astonished that such "unlearned and ignorant men" dared to teach the way of life in a manner not at all in unison with the wise conceptions of the scribes and doctors, gathered mainly from the traditions of men. When Paul left the popular

religion to become a follower and witness of the Lord Jesus Christ, what a torrent of persecution set in against him! And when, as a prisoner—very near the end of his ministry—he arrived at Rome, and informed the chief of the Jews there that for the “hope of Israel” he was bound with a chain, their reply (referring to the disciples of Jesus Christ) was, “As concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against.”

This is enough to fully illustrate the point, without drawing from the pages of secular history, which often shows the multitude in the wrong, and the individual, or minority, in the right.

Well, those who meet in the afore-mentioned meeting-room as given at the head of this paper, avoid sectarian ground, and are gathered to Christ's name as members of His body. Plymouth Brethren is the vulgar or conventional term applied to them. But they know themselves simply as Christians, owning only God's church. They have been led to see that professing Christendom has not abode in the goodness of God. For instead of endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit, they have set up sects, creeds, and clergy, contrary to the written Word; and therefore those who would obey God rather than man cannot attend churches or chapels. It is not that they deny those who attend to be Christians (which, praised be the Lord, many are); but they believe their systems to be opposed to His word. For themselves, they gather together as Christ very plainly directed. They believe that the human arrangements within the various ecclesiastical systems practically deny the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and the real presence of the Holy Ghost to direct.

The Divine Founder of the Church provided for this day of ruin when He said, “Where two or three are gathered together in (or, unto) my Name, there am I in the midst of them.” Therefore do they recognise His presence, however few they may be. They also believe that the Holy Ghost is sent down, not simply to dwell within the individual believer, but to act in and with them unitedly as He pleases, though of course only and always according to the Word of God. “No man, speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed (or, anathema), and no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” How does this harmonise either with the one-man ministry of the

denominations, or with the whole proceedings being arranged beforehand? Thereby is the authority of the Lord set at naught, and the free, unfettered operations of the Holy Ghost are excluded and impossible. Such Scriptures as Romans xii., 1 Corinthians xii., xiv., Ephesians iv., 1 Thessalonians v., and 1 Peter iv. are thus made obsolete.

We (*i.e.*, the "Brethren") gather together on the first day of the week to break bread in remembrance of the Lord's death, according to His institution (see Matthew xxvi. 26, &c., Mark xiv. 22, &c., Luke xxii. 14, &c., 1 Corinthians x. 16, &c., xi. 20, &c.). We do so "on the first day of the week," for it is recorded in Acts xx. 7—"and upon the first day of the week, when the disciples (or "we") came together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, ready to depart on the morrow." It will be seen by this that they came together to break bread; and that Paul, being present, was led to utilise the opportunity by discoursing with them. But all scripture shows it to be quite unscriptural for any one or class to monopolise the whole administration, to the exclusion of the rest. If we believe the Word, the Lord is present to direct whom He sees fit, to give thanks and render this or that service. It is written in 1 Corinthians x. 16, "The cup of blessing which *we* bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which *we* break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" You will notice it is "*we* bless" and "*we* break." Presiding, or taking the lead, has its due place according to scripture; but not in shutting out Christ's members from their part on these occasions.

The apostles ordained men to local charges, and Paul instructed Titus and Timothy to the same effect. But the apostolic authority ceased with the apostles, and, we ask, where is any record of the office being perpetuated? The churches of Rome and England lay claim to apostolic succession for their bishops; let them at least show "the signs of an apostle" before asking others to listen to them. But the Lord Himself still gives gifts to men, for it is written in 1 Corinthians xii. 4, "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit, and there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord, and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God, which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues; but all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He (the Spirit) will." Although some of these gifts are no longer given, yet the principle applies to those that remain—that they are given by the Spirit, and to those whom He chooses. Moreover, see Acts xiii. 2, Galatians i. 15, with which compare verse 1, &c. In the first of these, there is mention made of the laying on of hands, but it here signified no more than commendation to the grace of God (ch. xiv. 26). What a contrast this, to the "orders" of ruined Christendom, where, unless a man has college training, patrons, &c., he cannot be a minister, no matter what gift he may be from the Lord; and they are guaranteed in Ephesians iv. to the end.

"Brethren" believe that for their worship, prayer, exhortation, and teaching to be accepted by God, every portion of it ought to be led by the Spirit, who is to abide with the saints for ever. Hence to pray for the Holy Ghost to be sent every now and then, or to come again, is dishonouring to Him, being already and always present. For the Lord did not fail of His promise; and the Spirit never leaves us. Yet what unbelief as to this is uttered and acted on in churches and chapels! Believing that the church is the body of Christ, God's habitation by the Spirit, Brethren hold that each believer ought to endeavour to keep the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." They deny that any unconverted person—no matter what ordinance or rite he has submitted to—is a member of the body of Christ. They believe that the church and the world are entirely alien from each other; that the saints will be "caught up" to be with the Lord for ever at His coming, but that the world is now lying under condemnation, and will end in judgment when He appears in glory.

Much more might be brought forward, but sufficient is herein offered to show the impartial reader that "Brethren" are not misguided, and that a consideration of their testimony to Christ is incumbent upon those who love Him, especially if involved in the unscriptural ways of ruined Christendom.

J. Musson.

1886