

# **INTER-DENOMINATIONAL FELLOWSHIP:**



**Does it Fulfil Apostolic Conditions?**

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## Does it Fulfil Apostolic Conditions?



An article by Mr. H. W. Frost (the Director in this country of the China Inland Mission) which first appeared in the organ of that Missionary Society: "China's Millions," and was then reprinted—evidently as being considered of exceptional importance—in "the Evangelical Christian",\* tells the readers that in view of the failure of every form of protest against existing abuses in the historical Church, that a new movement has followed, in which "devoted men, while remaining in their denominational connections, began to plan and produce new Christian activities, simple in form, sound in doctrine, and making much of prayer, faith and dependence on the Holy Spirit."

Among the failed testimonies he names the Methodists, the Plymouth Brethren, and the Salvation Army; but gives a special paragraph to "Plymouth Brethrenism", which, he says, "promised for a time, to bring to pass the reestablishment of apostolic conditions, and good men at first turned to it as doves flock to their windows. But it was soon discovered, in spite of much manifested truth, and godliness that it also was weak through the flesh, and its final failure as a system left men perplexed and discouraged."

But, thus perplexed and discouraged, "spiritually minded men and women were once more reaching out after apostolic conditions, both in faith and practice" and these have apparently been found in the recognition of Denominations as being "apostolic", merely necessitating a union of their members outside them, for the common

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\*And still later, with some modifications in "Inland Africa."

object of "new Christian activities". For we are carefully assured that "the various independent missionary societies are not schismatic, either in character or spirit; they are on the contrary operating within the Church, and hence are undenominational in form and inter-denominational in fellowship, allowing to their members a full expression of denominational preferences and activities."\*

I have not the slightest intention of saying one word in disparagement of the C. I. M., nor of its devoted band of workers (may the Lord abundantly bless their self-denying labours!), nor of descending to profitless controversy with our esteemed brother, Mr. Frost: my sole purpose is to consider, in the light of Scripture, the claims of the position that he avowedly takes, and seeking to learn whether this be the divine path for us through the "confusion worse confounded" of our day.

First Mr. F. is by no means alone. There has, as he rightly says, grown up within the last few years, what is really a school of teachers, who, having profited (as they for the most part admit) by the light graciously given of God, to and through those he terms Plymouth Brethren, (a name always earnestly disavowed by those to whom it was attached) now disconnect themselves from these witnesses, proclaim their failure, and because of that failure, are attempting what they suppose is a new path: the remaining in the various denominational Churches, but simply uniting for Christian activities

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\*This movement must not be identified, although somewhat similar in avowed purpose, with the "Interdenominational scheme" that found its expression in a gathering in Philadelphia in February of the representatives of some twenty denominations, and which "opens the way for a gradual merging of the interdenominational interests while retaining the present denominational ecclesiastical organizations." The idea of Mr. Frost, and those with him, is far more vital and less formal; more spiritual and less ecclesiastical; but the recognition of "denominational preferences" is the same in both; and undoubtedly merely ante-dates the day when there shall indeed be but one "ecclesiastical organization" upon earth, and that one plainly named for us: "Babylon the Great the mother of harlots", supported by that which is also taking shape in embryo, the "Beast", or revived Roman empire. (Rev. xvii.)

As for Plymouth-Brethrenism (to allow the name for the sake of argument) let many of us who are profoundly thankful to have been identified with that divine movement now for very many years, confess, with deepest shame and sorrow, its failure to maintain the testimony intrusted to it. Nor do I believe that any Spirit-taught Christian, who has been led to take his place outside of "denominations" to the one Name of Jesus, but would admit that sorrowful fact.

But then, while nothing is the slightest excuse for that failure, we must remember that Christianity itself, as intrusted to man's hand has been proved (to use Mr. F.'s quotation) weak through the flesh; and the scoff of the infidel and worldling is that it has not even brought its professors to be at peace among themselves.

So has the Church Universal failed, as a witness for the Lord Jesus, for it is about to be "spewed out of his mouth" on account of that thorough failure.

So has everything entrusted to man's feeble hand. It is failure, failure, failure from the very beginning to the very end of time—confusion of face belongs to us!

But we must inquire what this that Mr. F. calls "Plymouth-Brethrenism" is, or (if he prefers) was? It is the term applied to a movement distinctly of God (for even its detractors admit that in its incipiency at least, it bore all the marks of its divine Author) that came into evidence in the first quarter of the last century, and was characterized, first by the most submissive obedience to the Word of God, and by that lowliness of mind, and brokenness of spirit, of which the Lord ever speaks with the keenest approval throughout the Scriptures. It thus repudiated with a loathing, shared with the Lord Himself, the assumption of a class claiming a position of superiority and authority over the mass: the clergy over the laity—being assured that the word "Nicolaitan" refers to such assumption. On the other hand, it valued and fostered all true ministry in the Spirit, practically owning the abiding presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church. Who, thus present, must not be hindered by human intrusion and appointment, from dividing to every man sev-

erally as he would. 1 Cor. xii, 11. It certainly included all those marks that Mr. F. speaks of as peculiarly characteristic of his new movement; but went further in maintaining the absolute sufficiency of the Name of Jesus, as a gathering Centre for all His people; and that any form of rivalry with that Name—any additional attraction of gathering, was repugnant to the Scriptures, dishonouring to the Name, and so opposed to the Mind of God.

It would thus admit of no distinguishing name, and if those who were thus led, called themselves brethren, it was simply because that was a term that necessarily included every member of the household of God: the adjunct “Plymouth” was added by those who (like Mr. Frost himself, I can but believe) never have had any real discernment as to the truth for which these beloved and honored saints stood in those days, and for which a remnant of them at least, still stand: the unity of the Body of Christ, and the sin of denominational division in it. This addition of “Plymouth” was, as I have said never accepted, and never will be accepted by any who know the principle involved, save under the strongest protest and clearest explanation.

Thus, to sum up in the most superficial way the unique points in the testimony of that movement, it was:

1: The sincere and humbling confession of the complete ruin of the testimony of the Church, in many ways: but inclusive of the multitude of discordant “denominations.”

2: Heartfelt acknowledgment of the unity existing between all true brethren, and sincere affection for them, quite irrespective of their intelligence or the lack of it, as to this, or any secondary truth.

3: The divinely given Centre of all Church gathering to be—not any inferior Name than that of Jesus, which was held sufficient to gather to Him all the true and only the true.

4: Nor was there the slightest thought of starting a new division, or Church, or Party; but a sincere identification of themselves with all the sin and failure on every hand, which they confessed as their own.

5: But while thus confessing before God, they stood in such radical separation from the world as to compel the appreciation of those who still held aloof from them.

6: Thus, not conformed to this world, they indeed proved what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God, for a flood of light was poured upon the Scriptures, and truths that had been absolutely lost since the days of the apostles were recovered, both to their joy and to their sorrow: joy at the recovery; sorrow at the extent of the lapse from the mind of God that that recovery revealed.

7: Amid these recovered truths one of the most characteristic was the looking for the return of the Lord Jesus from heaven as a present hope, with all the changes that this necessitated in connected lines. This hope has since spread till a large proportion of the Lord's true people share it.

But again we must sorrowfully confess that this divine movement thus happily started, as it became widespread, and increased in popularity, did quickly fail; and in proportion to the privileges granted, so the depth and seriousness of the fall.

Complacency in a correct ecclesiastical position soon took the place of identification with the universal failure. Division after division among themselves, or rather ourselves (for indeed one would not dissociate oneself from this shame) indicated but too sorrowfully that these once lowly people were again succumbing to the wiles of the enemy; till we, who made a kind of rallying cry of the truth of the "one Body" and its resultant responsibilities, split up into a dozen parties, which absolutely denied in practice that all inclusive truth, fully as zealously as the most partisan of the sects;\* and it is to be feared that the liberty of the Spirit to minister through whom He would became practically so enfeebled as to be but an empty sound, for all these divisions were caused—or largely caused—by discord between those in preeminence. But "like priest like people" degeneracy prevailed all,

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\*Never defended however, or excused, as are the Denominational Churches; but always confessed as a grave failure.

for "brotherly love" ceased to bind us together; and "Philadelphia," as being the last character of Church-testimony, passed away, and its place has been taken by "Laodicea", with its ill-based assumptions, so sternly condemned by the Lord Himself.

But having thus unreservedly and sincerely admitted this failure, we are compelled to speak as it were foolishly, and to deny emphatically that those "good men who at first turned to it as doves flock to their windows" ever turned away again, and returned to the "Denominational churches" they had abandoned, as might be inferred from Mr. F.'s words. They have all passed off the scene now, and have left the truths for which they stood, and for which they suffered not a little reproach, to feebler hands; but there was no wavering in their convictions, and of them it may be said, in a somewhat different sense: "these all died in faith."

Yes, even to the present hour, notwithstanding all that has been admitted, nowhere are the fundamental truths of Christianity more faithfully maintained—nowhere are the inroads of modern-day heresies, that permeate, with ever increased virulence, those denominational Churches to which Mr. Frost, by the example of his new movement, advises adherence, more earnestly resisted—nowhere is every form of Christian activity (including foreign missions) more devotedly engaged in, than among those who still repudiate every term that would sever them from their brethren everywhere, and that would permit a rivalry with the Name of Jesus.

But again, to go a step further, let me seriously ask: Does any acknowledged failure weaken or effect in the slightest degree one jot of those truths that were held and proclaimed by those who may have failed to maintain them? Surely not.

Does then, that failure lessen the responsibility of a single individual anywhere at any time (you, my reader, whose eye now scans these lines) to live in submissive obedience to each and all of these, as well as to every other truth. Surely not, again; for it would be a strange, yet not uncommon form of reasoning to make



sin the excuse for further sin, and seeking to avoid responsibility ourselves by reason of the failure of others. The inconsistencies of professing Christians, we all know are frequently made the excuse of the impenitent for continuing in that impenitence; but we do not allow that it has any force in such case—nor should it in this.

Even apostate Rome still professes many fundamental truths, nor are they affected by that apostacy, so that we may reject *them* because *she* holds them.

Grant that Protestantism too has grievously failed (as who could deny?) does that affect the basal truth of justification by faith—or indeed any other?

Grant too that this last lovely work of God, of which we have been speaking, of drawing out the members of Christ from the various Denominations to His Name, has, in its turn, most grievously failed, does that suffice to make that to be right which His word expressly and clearly declares to be wrong? Or does He now approve what he once condemned? Or does the Holy Spirit (dependence on Whom Mr. F. especially claims) now lead in a path that once He sternly forbade to be trodden. Or is that now “apostolic” which the apostle so sternly reproveth? (1 Cor. i, and iii.)

To apply more specifically, is the Name of God’s beloved Son, Jesus, no longer sufficient; but must we still add to that Name our “denominational preferences”? What does our brother say to that? Believe me, I ask these questions in no spirit of judging my brethren, nor even to embarrass them. It is *we* who have placed a stumbling block before their feet and are *we* the ones to condemn them for stumbling? Fain would I be, if the great grace of our Lord permit, of the least service to those to whom we, on every count, owe such ministry, and remove all stumbling blocks by the unchanging nature of God’s truth, that would, I am fully assured, lead them still—not into, but rather out of all denominational distinctions; and that, not for the single purpose of “Christian activity”, nor as thus expressing a temporary union; but for all purposes and forever as expressing a unity that God has made and that is irrefragable.

But here I can well believe that I hear a voice, as I have often heard, asking: "But then, how shall we attain that position, which we freely confess to be desirable enough? What do you counsel? What can we do? Where can we go, where there is not precisely the same division that you so freely condemn as sin? Must we join one of these other divisions among Brethren, which, to our conscience are no less divisions because they disavow that term? Nay, it seems to us to be at least more honest and true to admit, with the candor of the Denominational Churches that they *are* denominations, than to make rather loud claims to maintain unity by receiving all Christians, and yet in practice be separate from thousands as godly as any; or to hide up the plain truth by some such euphemism as we are not a party, but a "Circle of fellowship". Can you explain what the difference is in the sight of God, between a Denomination that does not embrace all Christians, and a Circle that also does not include all Christians, but excludes many? 'Oh', but we hear a representative voice from each Circle cry, 'the Circle with which *I* am connected, does include every evidenced true Christian'. But how can that be, if there be more than one such? That one would, in that case, include all the others, and the circumference of that Circle would be as wide as the Body of Christ, and we would be already in it. You must too pardon us, but we have seen too much of the practical denial of this to credit your claim. We have heard of very many Christians—quite as truly such as yourselves—who are met by a closed door when they approach the gatherings of your Circle, and that—not because of any wickedness in any real sense, but for the sole reason that they refuse to be limited to that narrow Circle; but would practically and obediently carry out what you vainly profess. O my brethren (our objector continues) as long as you can thus act, your speech, (fair enough as it is) is of little avail; your acts speak louder than your words and they are indeed, as Mr. Frost says, enough to fill us with perplexity and discouragement."

There is but too much truth in this—we have sinned against our brethren, as well as against our Lord; but that throws us back on the original question (and we ask it in fullest sympathy with our brethren's perplexity): Has our God no path for all of us, save that which He once condemned? That would surely not be reasonable. There must be such a path that His word approves, and free from complicity with what that word condemns, whether we can discern it or not. It cannot surely be that there is no escape from being in some sect or party: or, in other words, that sin is unavoidable.

Let us then see what remains to us unaffected by all the failure, to this very hour. First and foremost the Scriptures, and we will start by accepting these as the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth—permit nothing else to guide us—approve only what they approve—condemn what they condemn, ignore what they ignore, and whenever we get a clear and simple direction from them we will seek from our God that grace ever needed to follow that direction—cost what it may.

Then we have revealed therein the Name of Jesus the beloved Son of God, our Lord and Saviour, to Whom we owe everything. That Name is left us still, unaffected by all our sin and failure, still it speaks as clearly as it ever did of salvation from all perplexity—all discouragement—to our perplexed and discouraged spirits. If He but grant us His promised Presence we shall not be badly off. On the other hand we would be more careful than ever to avoid association with all that would dishonor Him. He, and He only is the solution of our difficulty. He, and He only is, as He ever was, "The Way" amid all the complexities of the problems that confront us.

Blessed be God our eyes are thus directed from earth with all its inextricable confusion, to heaven with all its order; and we are delivered from that hopeless search through all the Denominations and Circles to find the one that is alone divinely accredited. Human failure to carry out divine principles no longer affects us. We are no longer occupied with the failures of "Methodist, Plymouth-Brethren, or Salvationists"; we drop them all,

and long only for our Lord Jesus Christ, and to have this testimony that we please Him, before we are raptured to meet Him.

Our brother Frost's new movement congratulates itself in leaving its advocates free to exercise their "denominational preferences". Preferences! What preference do we want, if our God has spoken? If He had written to the Corinthians: "You are quite free to take your choice between Cephas, Paul, Apollos or Christ:" then we too would act on that direction; but, far from that, He put then all mere parties under the same condemnation, and there, under that same condemnation, lie these Denominations today: What "preferences" can we have when all are condemned?

One other point: Mr. Frost speaks with evident complacency on this feature of this inter-denominational movement—it is not schismatic; and he tells us why it is not. Because "they are operating within the Church, and hence are undenominational in form and interdenominational in fellowship". But surely this depends entirely on what the Church is. Is it, according to the Scriptures, *one* of these Denominations, or composed of the aggregate of them as Mr. F. and popular speech assumes? Is the Church made up of Churches, and these actually distinguished and separated from each other by divergencies of doctrine or of government?

The word "Church" as now used, is strangely elusive, meaning different things in different lips; and indeed, at different times, in the same lips; but this I must not pause to consider now. But suppose some Christian in Corinth, having read that epistle, and being convinced by it of his error in saying "I am Cephas", ceased to do that evil, he surely would not join himself with any other of the parties: Apollos, Paul, or Christ Himself as if He too were a mere party leader, and make that supreme Name a party-badge (and this is still very possible even by those who may zealously repudiate the names that may now answer to Paul, Apollos, and Cephas: Presbyterian, Methodist, Episcopalian, etc.) but refuse every name than that which would cover all for whom He died,

and to which they had all been baptized—even the all-uniting Name of Jesus: thus including and not excluding any of his brethren—would he have been schismatic?

In Scripture there is but one Church, not even two, much less 1500 (more or less) but only *one*. For since there is but one Head, not two, and one Head admits of but one body, so that body is the one only Church. Nor does the mere accident of distance, such as for instance separated Ephesus from Philippi, so that there was a local representative of this one Church in each of these places affect the simple truth. These were not “Denominations” that are not separated by distance at all.

But this being the case, it surely follows that those that you call, and perhaps sincerely esteem to be “Churches”, and apparently believe when conglomerated together in the mind, in a heterogeneous mass, to form the one Church, are not, in the light of the divine Word, Churches at all; but themselves simply *schismata*: sects, rents in the one body, to which you are giving in your adhesion, apparently under the conviction that in so doing you are acting according to “apostolic conditions”, and not only avoiding “schism” but feel quite free to suggest that those who would avoid these schisms are themselves the schismatics!

No, beloved brethren, no; it is these “Denominational Churches” and all humanly constructed “Circles” more limited in their boundaries than the one Body of Christ, that are the sects, in the pure light of divine truth, and our brother Frost’s “Inter-denominational” movement is not merely “weak through the flesh”, but is unscriptural at its very base, and keeps those who adopt it in an altogether false position. Nor do the Sects themselves, as such, greatly value our brethren: it may indeed be questioned if they would not prefer their room to their company, save as they may first intertwine their Nazarite locks with the web of their own work, and may thus get the reputation that may be derived from that connection. Nor do these brethren on their part, need the sects: they

will lose nothing of true worth in abandoning them, if they have but their Lord alone, and not their poor failing brethren before their eyes. Why then should the unscriptural, unspiritual, unnatural, undesirable, and undesired alliance continue? Is not the name of the Lord Jesus Christ—the Name of “Jesus” enough?

Yes, it is enough, God be praised, and we will not even think of seeking, amid all these broken fragments, the one true Church; for if we do but find the true Head, we have surely found, in every individual, who evidences the being joined to that Head, the one true Church which is His Body. To Him—to Him alone—in that Name of Jesus—Saviour—so perfectly in accord with all our sin, failure and sorrow, since it more than offsets all, will we gather still; ever hungering to know Him better; ever listening more intently for that Voice that at first we heard bidding us to come to Him for rest, and, coming, we found (blessed be His Name) the rest He promised. So now, we would listen afresh to that same Voice telling us—not as our Accuser, but as One who loves us, and Whose faithful rebuke is but the evidence of that love—that we are (as being the last failed testimony on earth) “wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked”; hearing this, confess its truth, throw away all our foolish assumptions, which alone bar His entrance to sup with us and we individually with Him. Yes, and if we can still find one who also knows his need and the Lord’s unfailing sufficiency we will gather to that Name with that one, quite sure that in His presence we shall come short in no real good that the Church had even in the primal days of its formation, but ever and always will we hold ourselves to be in vital fellowship—in spirit and in truth—with every saint of God.

My reader, does not this commend itself to you as being the divine path, ecclesiastically, for His people through the present confusion? If so, may we have His grace to walk in it!

I cannot close without referring to one other point as to the path of a true *minister* of God, amid the denominational confusion of the day. We know what that path was under genuine "apostolic conditions", for it is an apostle who tells us in 1 Cor., iv, 9-13; and again in 2 Cor., vi., 4-10,\* and while, in all the gentleness of the Spirit of Christ, he says that he does not tell us this to "shame" us, it may well humble us all, who, even if we *do* follow, it is "afar off" indeed.

But many of those "Plymouth Brethren" (so-called) whose failure has apparently made even the *truths* for which they stood, negligible (at least as far as those truths involve separation from sects) had been Clergymen, regularly ordained, in one or the other of the regular Denominational Churches, with a regular stipend, and the regular title of "Reverend"; but these left everything altogether and unreservedly—gave up, not merely place, stipend, title of honor; but stripped of all these, and amid no little reproach, took the place of absolute dependence on the living Lord Jesus for the supply of every form of need in the exercise of their ministry.

As another has testified of them they went forth "without purse or scrip to preach the gospel\*\* in every city, and almost in every European tongue and none went before them to sound the trumpet of fame"\*\*\*: and to this I can add that even to this present hour there are some who are still walking in that same path, unknown and unnoticed by any of the great "forward movements" of the day.†

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\*I beg my readers to turn to, and ponder a little these most important Scriptures.

\*\*Yes, and much more than, and of quite a different character from, what goes under the name of "gospel" today, in which even the most anti-christian doctrine is hidden under that word. Even Unitarians, and all forms of Rationalism, and ecclesiastical infidelity have their "ministers of the *gospel*"!

\*\*\*Testimony of the late Dr. A. J. Gordon of Boston.

†I refer to those movements which, alas, seem to rest purely (or impurely) on a money basis: so many souls to be saved at

But while very far removed from these, yet, in full accord with its finding “apostolic conditions” in what the apostles condemned, many of the leaders in this “new movement” of our brother Frost, have also been Clergymen; but these, for the most part, either continue unmoved in that same clerical position; or, with conscience possibly rendered somewhat uneasy by the light of the Scriptures, disavow the title of “Reverend”, and only retain that which is certainly to be found in Scripture: “Pastor”. They desire it to be known that *that* is the gift of the Lord to them, and that *they* are that gift to His Church.

We shall all heartily concur that no “gift” is of more inestimable value, and especially in these days, than that of the pastor, in whom strong faith, sound judgment, and tenderness of heart unite to fit to enter into all the perplexities, sorrows, trials, dangers of each sheep of Christ—to seek out and restore the wandering wherever they may be found—in a word, to Shepherd the Flock. Oh, if our brethren are this in very truth, then God be fervently thanked for them all, and may He add many more to their number.

But it will also be admitted that it is at least *possible* to change a name, while leaving the principles involved, and the position attached to that name unchanged; and if once it be allowed that the Holy Spirit now approves what once He condemned, how fully the way is opened for the approval under a scriptural word of what might be felt to lack all scriptural endorsement under another.

If we are willing to form our convictions, and—what is far more difficult—regulate our practice, by the Word of God, even though it be opposed to all that we see around us, let us ask: Does that Word ever speak of

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so many dollars; so that the cost of the salvation of the whole world, can be estimated as easily as any other commercial enterprise—in Dollars!! Were those 3000 at Pentecost bought cheaply when the Preacher said “silver and gold have I none”, or was that cost then, and is it now, of incalculable worth; the precious Blood?



### *the Pastor of a Church?*

“The question is a foolish one” I imagine to be the unspoken thought of my reader, “who ever heard of a Church without its Pastor? It would hardly *be* a Church at all”. But when we turn to Scripture we learn that Pastors are but *one* of the gifts of the Lord; and never is *any* gift for *a* Church; but always for *the* Church which in His Body: a term that surely cannot be applied to any local Church in any exclusive sense. These Pastors then referred to in Eph. iv, were gifts to *the* Church, and each of them was *a* Pastor to that universal Church. It is quite true that there *may* have been only one man so gifted in a local assembly; but as there were certainly more than one Bishop in Philippi (Phil. 1, 1) it is far more likely that there was more than one Pastor in each of those primal Churches. Ah, that was a happy day when the bountiful flow of needed gifts from the unsearchably rich Head, was not impeded as in ours by human intrusion, when in many cases, far from giving *several* Bishops to *one* Church, we can only afford *one* Bishop to many Churches!

Scripture gives a two-fold aspect of these ministries: the one in 1 Cor., xii-xiv; and the other in Eph. iv. In the former they express the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, and where *He* is He must surely govern all spiritual activities, and “divide to everyone severally as *He* will”: the intrusion of human will here is simply impertinence or worse. In His Presence and under His control, all are on one level—the Bishop, the Evangelist, the Pastor, the Teacher,—all being simply brethren amid brethren; the most honored not distinguished from the most humble, the “more feeble” being equally necessary. For here *power* is the prominent idea, and that is vested solely in the Spirit of God. Here we have no Pastors, or Evangelists, but “healings, miracles, tongues, and their interpretation”, all of which (possibly because they were not for them that believe, but for them that believe not) have passed away from the sphere of professed belief, although we still have all that is for edification in prophecy teaching and the word of wisdom and knowledge.

But in Eph. *power* is not the prominent idea, but *love*; and there the gifts are those of the Lord's love to His Church; and as He loves it "to the end" (John xiii) so do these gifts continue to the end: even apostles and prophets being with us in their writings. But not one of these gifts, let me repeat, was or is to a local Church, but to that "one Body" of which the Spirit is here speaking, and is to be exercised, in dependence upon, and in responsibility to the Head alone: any assumption over, or interference with the exercise of these gifts is again simple impertinence. The maintenance of fundamental truth is, of course, the responsibility of all.

May I then ask, in all sincere affection and with the respect due to the earnest labors of these beloved brethren, and whom, on so many counts, one can honestly "esteem better than oneself", do they act in conformity with these revealed truths, or do they, in that local Church with which they are connected, act as if the Lord had placed upon *them* the responsibility of exercising therein every known gift of His love to the Church? Are *they* the Teachers, and must therefore expound the Word of God? Are *they* the Evangelists and must therefore preach the gospel to the lost? Are *they* the Pastors, and must therefore visit the flock that they may still call theirs? In a word, are *all* the gifts that remain to the Church focussed in those who, by the name they take, assure all that they are, after all, only distinctively—"Pastors"?

Nay more, do they—or some of them—go beyond Scripture altogether and assume that it devolves upon them alone to preside at the Lord's Supper, give thanks for, and dispense the elements? Must they and none but they officiate at baptisms? Is it thus they would maintain order by the grossest disorder?

May these beloved brethren bear with me, they may well do so, for I am well assured that their conscience responds to this truth that the faithful exercise of a "gift" speaks for its possession far more effectively than the assumption of the title, as in the case of that "household of Stephanas" who had, without any such assump-

tion, "addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints" and it was because of this lowly self-effacement in those who served them, that the saints were to submit themselves to them and all such. So the abundant labors of these brethren do, and ever will secure the affection and confidence of those they serve; while, if their "gift" be really that of their Pastor, their solicitude for the welfare of the sheep will be their best credential to that most needed and valued gift, while the responsive affection of the flock will spontaneously accord to them the honor that their faithful ministry demands.

We know perfectly well that there is ever a certain degree of reputation attached to all that is esteemed "regular": a certain degree of reproach to all that is outside this regular sphere\*. We have but one opportunity that this one little transient life gives to share His reproach, Who certainly was outside of all that was religiously regular in His day and Whose one mind was to make Himself of no reputation. It is in leading—going before—not merely teaching, but *showing*—marking out the way for His sheep in that holy path hallowed by His Feet, that our beloved brethren will accredit themselves as true "Pastors" without any assumption of the name. May the Lord's grace abound to them, enabling them thus to approve themselves true ministers of God, in this day of incipient apostacy.

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\*It does not of course follow that because people sever themselves from all that is esteemed "regular" that this in itself must accredit the doctrines they teach or hold—far from it. There have been many Satanic imitations of this holy truth of separation to the Lord covering the most abominable anti-christian doctrines, enough to make any sensitive soul hesitate long before taking any step. The Lord kept before the eye of the heart is alone the safe guiding Star: "the meek will He guide in judgment; the meek will He teach His way."

Now, my reader, will you easily lay this little paper on one side, and, as you do so, let its message pass, quite as easily, from your heart and conscience? Well, if you have only the feeblest of human messengers to deal with, you will do well. But if God has spoken in it—if it be the Truth of His Word, peradventure brought, with some convincing power to your conscience by His Spirit, then, O my beloved reader, be warned against *anything* leading you to treat lightly or indifferently that Truth—your serious loss, here and hereafter, must inevitably follow. If, on the other hand, you recognize the commandments of Him we love (alas, how feebly!) and would *keep them*, then shall you say with David: “More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned, and in *keeping them* there is great reward.”



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