

THE ONLY FELLOWSHIP  
AND THE  
RIGHT STATE FOR COMMUNION  
By J.N.D.

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OPENNESS IN RECEIVING  
AND  
FREEDOM IN SERVING  
By W.K.

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THE ASSEMBLY AND MINISTRY  
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BLACKHEATH, *August 31, 1875.*

MY DEAR BROTHER, . . . Individuals among brethren may urge their private views on evangelists or others; but all such narrowness is censured by every wise man in our midst; and, what is more important, it is dead against that return to keeping Christ's word and not denying His name which characterises the work. The question has often arisen as to fellowship as well as service; and as often those who are entitled to speak have resisted the tendency to a restrictive school. If some have sought to require intelligence in those received, my own answer has been that it is vain and unscriptural; that they themselves when received were the very reverse of intelligent; that if intelligence is to be anywhere, it should be in those who receive; and that those who require it in the received

fail in the intelligence they demand from others ; else they would not expect it where it could not be. For how could men in sects really understand the church of God? They might see just enough to disturb them from the wrong and attract them to the right ; but all true intelligence is acquired in obedience. What is the worth of that which we learn in disobedience? and what the character of the principle which would keep in disobedience, in order to be intelligent, those who can get it only aright in obedience? Hence *Scripture knows nothing of keeping outside a godly-walking member of Christ.*

As little does it countenance the church's interference with the Lord's work, and especially in the gospel. To set the servant in the simplest dependence on the Lord, to foster his immediate responsibility to the Lord, without the intervention of the church, is what every brother holds as a sacred duty and principle. One must not plead, however, one's liberty in order to gain

license. *We may not grant a license, but we dare not exact a pledge.*

We would rather trust in the Lord and His grace, while we would warn against all laxity as a scandal to the saint, and the enemy's snare for discrediting grace. When positive sin in word or deed appears, the church is bound to judge; and individuals may warn in love and holy care if they believe there is danger. More than this I should refuse; but this maintains the evangelist intact in his liberty and his responsibility to his Master.

Ever yours,

W.K.

## THE ASSEMBLY AND MINISTRY

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IF the brethren prefer all meetings of brethren as such, it is all very well; I have no objection; I would most cordially meet with them. But when they do not meet corporately as brethren, then I act on my individual responsibility to God—I individualize myself. If I find it profitable to associate another with me, as Barnabas or Silas (Paul *chose* Silas), it is all well; but I must take care how I do so. I count it of the very last importance to maintain individual responsibility, while ministering in unity and discipline in form: if individual responsibility be not recognised therewith, it becomes a petty Rome, and worse, from being narrower. Where charity is warm, there is no difficulty. If brethren who have a room desire to use it only for corporate meetings, as I have said, it is all well, and I admit the liberty of the Spirit edifying by whom He will; but my responsibility of individual gift is between me and Christ, where not

exercised in a corporate meeting; I dare not forego the responsibility (woe is me if I do!); and no one can meddle with it—he meddles with the prerogative of Christ. *In* the assembly, the order of the assembly, or Christ by the Spirit in that, is supreme; *out* of the assembly I act on my own responsibility to the Lord. If I have five talents, I do not necessarily club with him who has two. I admit freely, alongside of this, all godly counsel, and all discipline as to error or misconduct. Even so, you cannot prevent a man's preaching alone; you can refuse to recognise, or warn, and the like. I attach all possible importance to this individual responsibility (repeating yet again all just accompanying discipline): I would not be of any body where it was touched; I dare not, for I should do just what Rome has—set up something between me and Christ. If the brethren do not like to lend me their place of meeting, where I may exercise my gift on this responsibility, I resist not; it is merely a question of rooms, or of expediency, perhaps; they may be

wiser in this than myself. This question arose as to myself once at ——. I replied, as above, that if the brethren did not like me to preach on my own responsibility in the room, and would have only open corporate meetings, I had no more to say: I would hire a room; but out of the corporate meetings I was Christ's servant, and I recognised no right in another to meddle with this responsibility, saving discipline if that were needed. The difficulty disappeared, as it always does where there is fidelity; though *humbleness* alone can save us getting out of one ditch into another.

J.N.D

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SAN FRANCISCO CALIFORNIA.

*August 1875.*

MY DEAR BROTHER,

As regards your first question, I think there is a mistake as to the position of the assembly, both in the sister and also of the brother who objected, perhaps in all. When a person breaks bread, they are in the only fellowship I know—owned members of the body of Christ. The moment you make another FULL fellowship, you make people members of your assembly, and the whole principle of meeting is falsified. The assembly has to be satisfied as to the persons, but as to receiving to break bread, is supposed to be satisfied on the testimony of the person introducing them, who is responsible to the assembly in this respect. This, or two or three visiting, is to me the question of adequate testimony to the



church we must have much patience, as their minds have been moulded in church membership ; but I ought not to falsify my own position, nor sanction it in the mind of another. If the person is known to all, and known to be there to break bread, all mention is needless : it is a testimony to the unity of the body. If an occasional thing, the person who introduces is responsible.

I remember a case where one growing in truth came to help sometimes in a Sunday school and from the other side of London, and asked the brethren if he might not break bread when there—time even did not allow of him to get back to his Baptist service—and he enjoyed the communion of saints. The brethren allowed him gladly ; and, if my recollection is right, his name was not given out when he came afterwards. Very soon he was amongst brethren entirely, but his fellowship was as full when he was not ; and had he given occasion, he would have been refused in discipline, just as if there every Sunday.

The other question is for me a more delicate one, because it is a question of the state of the soul, as of the church, when darkness covers it. Many, many souls cry, Abba, Father (*i.e.*, have the Spirit of adoption), which are clear in nothing, save that their confidence is in Christ and His work only; and as doubting is taught in the church, and a plain, full gospel unknown and even rejected by teachers, this state is the natural consequence; and it often requires spirituality to discern the real state of a soul, if really under law undelivered or legalized by teaching. Hard, cold knowledge of doctrine is not what I seek. Then there is the danger of throwing back a soul just when it wants to be encouraged. Doubts brought in by conflict, when a soul can really say, Abba, are not a ground of rejection, though it shows a soul not well established. But a soul exercised, but not yet resting in Christ's work, is not in a right state for communion. So with young converts—it is far better for them to wait until they have peace,

only carefully showing it is not to reject them, but for their own good. I should not look for understanding deliverance, but being personally able to say, Abba, Father. The intelligence of deliverance is the consequence of sealing. But if a man be not sealed, he is not in the Christian position. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Peace through forgiveness is as to Christ's work the evidence of faith in Christ's work, and that work received by faith is the ground of sealing. Then one is delivered; but the intelligence of this is another thing. Israel out of Egypt was brought to God—delivered. Through Jordan they entered in, were circumcised, and ate the corn of the land. But a sealed person alone is in the true Christian position, and this is founded on the sprinkling with blood, *i.e.*, faith in Christ's work by which we have redemption, not in the knowledge of deliverance. That is its effect.

J.N.D.