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*74 Granton Road,  
Edinburgh, 5.*

*6th February, 1940.*

My dear Brother,

The circular you gave me to read, written by dear Mr. G. but reiterates what has already emerged from well known sources. All will readily appreciate the disturbed feelings of our aged brother and his fervent desire to arrest division. Here are some comments on matters referred to, in the circular.

**CUTTING OFF A MEETING.**

Much has been spoken lately about cutting off Meetings. Let us consider if this properly describes the action of brethren when they refuse to have further fellowship with a Meeting that has abandoned the ground of the church of God.

When the early brethren of last century left the religious bodies with which they were connected, it was not on account of bad doctrines; but because they discovered from the Scriptures that these systems of religion were not on the ground of the church of God. All the great systems of Christendom have been fashioned more or less after the Judaistic pattern, called in Scripture "The Camp." Heb. XIII. 13. These early brethren, in separating from "The Camp" of Christendom did not cut off these systems, but simply refused to continue any longer with what was not the church.

About 1845 some of the brethren, who had earlier separated from the systems, were compelled to leave the Meeting at Ebrington Street, Plymouth. This was not on account of evil teachings, for the bad doctrine of Mr. Newton about the Lord's Person had not yet come to light; but because the Meeting had left the ground of the church of God. One of the reasons given for leaving by Mr. Darby is

found in Coll. Writ. Vol. XX, page 114, "The gathering in Ebrington Street is a sectarian party everywhere, or an independent church, and the true unity of the body of Christ is denied there."

A few years later, brethren were compelled to separate from the Bethesda Meeting, Bristol; not because bad doctrine was taught, but because that gathering refused to acknowledge the divine principle that association with evil defiles. Some forty brethren left Bethesda Meeting, and many Meetings throughout the country refused to walk any longer with the brethren there, because the Meeting was no longer on the ground of the church of God. This was not cutting off the Meeting, but simply refusing to continue in fellowship with it.

The Kingsland matter is very similar to those we have just considered. Some of the brethren in the Kingsland Meeting withdrew from fellowship after protesting in vain for a considerable time against the independency of

the Meeting and of the leading brothers. They judged that the ground of the church of God had been given up, and therefore they could not remain.

Peckham, the nearest Meeting to Kingsland, investigated carefully the charges made, and patiently endeavoured to have a proper enquiry. The Kingsland leaders refused to have a proper enquiry. Being satisfied that the charges against Kingsland were true, the Peckham brethren endorsed the judgment and action of the brethren who had withdrawn from Kingsland by extending to them the right hand of fellowship. Peckham's action, in receiving the seceders, plainly declared that they could no longer walk with Kingsland.

Meetings in different parts of the country, where brethren were exercised about the reported independency of Kingsland, learning of Peckham's action, and being fully persuaded that the charges made against Kingsland had been substantiated, decided to receive the brethren received by Peckham. The brethren

in these Meetings can no longer have fellowship with the Kingsland gathering because of its having, by its independency, forsaken the true ground of the church of God. To remain in fellowship with Kingsland, or any other Meeting on independent lines, is to sanction the practical denial of the truth of the One Body, and to deny that Christians have One Lord.

### **DIVISION AMONGST THE SAINTS.**

With our beloved brother we may well deplore the dread fact and results of division amongst the saints of God. But it has become evident that there are two opposing attitudes to the practices of the Kingsland Meeting. There are those who condone or justify the Kingsland brethren, and there are those, like the Peckham brethren, who refuse to have further fellowship with them. Unless the Lord in mercy intervenes such a division of judgment will produce a separation of Meetings and brethren.

The wound already appears on the surface, but it is not yet incurable. If healing is to be effected, the cause of the wound must be diagnosed and treated. To leave the cause of the present trouble untouched, while bemoaning the results of division, will but produce irritation and bring increased suffering. In this connection we do well to consider the twice mentioned allusion to Israel's wound in Jeremiah VI. 14, and VIII. 11.

What then are the causes of our present trouble? First, there is the low spiritual condition of our souls. We have departed, through carelessness and lack of communion, from the spiritual inward state, and from the practical piety that marked brethren formerly. There may be much to commend us in the way of service, as was the case with the church in Ephesus, but like the saints there we have left our first love and Christ no longer dwells in the heart by faith. This grave departure doubtless accounts for the increase of worldly mindedness, worldly practices and worldly

associations that have weakened our testimony and made us a reproach. If there is to be healing, we shall have to get down on our faces before God in true repentance, confessing our failure and departure ; in humiliation and confusion of face crying to Him for His mercy.

Another contributory cause of our trouble is that we are losing hold of the truth of God. A well known servant of the Lord, now at home, in conversation a few years ago, deplored the lack of enquiry after the truth on the part of many of the saints. Other spiritual brethren, who have faithfully served the Lord and the saints have warned us that we are in great danger of losing the truth of the Mystery. No one at all acquainted with the great wealth of truth centring in the Mystery of God can escape the feeling that these truths are becoming unknown and unwanted by many. If we let go such great truths as those of the One Body, The Headship of Christ, and the activities of the Holy Spirit in the assembly, we shall rapidly decline, and return to "The



Camp " order of religion from which the power of these truths separated the brethren at the beginning of last century.

Having mentioned the underlying causes of our trouble, spiritual decline and loss of the truth, we shall now name the ecclesiastical cause that has come to the surface in our present exercises. It is the independent practices of certain brothers and Meetings, with Kingsland as a focus. Independency is the practical denial of the truths of the unity of the church and that saints have One Lord. It can manifest itself in a variety of ways, but always leads to confusion and sorrow when practised among saints endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. If all the saints were holding the Head, and as members of the One Body having the same care for each other, this horrible feature of wilfulness and lawlessness could not show its head.

How then are we to meet the present danger of division? Scripture gives a clear and

simple answer, “ Now I beseech you brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned ; and avoid them.” Romans XVI. 17. This attitude should be adopted in love and without bitterness towards those who by their independent practices, which are contrary to the teaching of Scripture, are causing widespread distress and division.

### **THREE ALTERNATIVES FOR KINGSLAND.**

Probably most of the Kingsland brethren are acting according to the measure of their light and with good conscience in the course they are pursuing (though this does not make their actions right), and would not willingly divide the saints. Here are three alternatives for them to ponder which will put them to the proof.

1. They can abandon intercommunion with Open brethren.
2. They can withdraw from fellowship with us for full fellowship with Open brethren.

3. They can pursue their present course, and ultimately divide the Meetings throughout the country.

We would rejoice if they chose the first ; but if they cannot do so with conviction they should take the second. To choose the third is dishonouring to the Lord and to themselves; and a cause of unrest and sorrow for their brethren.

Real and solemn issues are before us, for much is at stake ; but these should be faced in the Spirit of Christ and in constant dependence upon God. The subtle foe seeks to minimise before the brethren the gravity of the situation, and by introducing personal matters genders strife and confuses the issue : " But we are not ignorant of his thoughts." 2 Cor. II. 11. Much grace and wisdom will be needed to resolve this painful exercise to God's glory, but we can draw lavishly upon the infinite resources of our heavenly Head. Patience and endurance will also be required,

for the Lord appears to be sifting and purifying His beloved saints in this trial.

May we all greatly gain in divine wisdom and spiritual understanding from our heart searchings and painful experiences, by passing through them all in more constant communion with God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Yours affectionately

in our Lord Jesus Christ,

(Signed) Wm. C. Reid.