

THE POSITION OF BELIEVERS,

CALLED BRETHERN,

TOWARDS OTHER CHRISTIANS,

Being the closing sheet of a Letter to a Friend.



As far as I can gather from conversation and their writings, the practical ground which Brethren occupy, with reference to receiving others at the Lord's table, is such as saves them from being charged with being a sect and acting sectarianly.

Brethren (I refer to those called "exclusive"), walking (as they believe) "according to the vocation wherewith they are called," as "the body of Christ" and "the habitation of God by the Spirit," receive to the Lord's table the members of *that body* upon the simple ground of their being "members of Christ," and walking in truth and holiness. The door among them is open to all believers, from the sects and systems around, upon this simple and divine footing.

In coming to the Lord's table and breaking with others there that "*one loaf*," they manifest their membership in the body of *Christ*, and by no means their association with "Brethren," so-called; and these "Brethren," in breaking bread as they do, by no means

witness to their own special association, but to the general truth of the oneness of the body, and their association is simply the display of this blessed reality both in the breaking of bread itself, and the way they receive others to it. This is surely *purely unsectarian ground*.

Some outside may try to make them out sectarian in their position; and some inside may be inclined to act in that way by shutting out believers, unless they go in as judging and separating from the systems out of which they come, but that is not the ground "Brethren" as a body are gathered upon, and any attempt by individuals thus to narrow things is, I know, strenuously resisted *and disallowed*.

The privilege of receiving to the Lord's table all the members *of Christ's body* on the one hand, and the responsibility of maintaining the holiness of God's house on the other, make up practically (as far as I can gather, and I am pretty sure I am correct) their position towards others. This is surely Scriptural ground to occupy. Is any other so? What they have in their midst, meeting thus, for joy and food, is *Christ* and His grace and truth; what they have for power, for worship, for service, and discipline, is the *Holy Ghost*; and what they have for authority and guidance, is exclusively the *Word of God*; and those who go in say they find it so, whatever they may think and say before going in.

But, besides, on the other hand, I have no doubt they have among them plenty of weakness and failure;

indeed, this is so, and they make no attempt to disguise or deny it; and were you and I going among them to "endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit," we should find that nothing but lowliness, meekness, and long-suffering, and forbearing one another in love, would enable us to get along happily and steadily; but the church is the last place one should think of for settling down in ease—as long as we are in the body.

Nevertheless, seeing that these things are so (and what I have written will, I think, be endorsed by any leading brother around you), there seems to be that in the position of "*Brethren*" which more fully commands one's moral respect than in anything else one sees; and, if it is Scriptural, and brings us the true Christ-centre, why should we wait for another either in sectional membership or in Elijah isolation? If that is God's thing, what advantage is there in holding by our own things, or waiting until something else is produced?

We may be rather staggered at some things we have seen, heard, or read of them, and especially at the apparent want of things we expected to find, as was John Baptist when he sent to Christ saying, "Art thou He that should come, or look we for another?" but as He gave John proofs of His Messiahship, so He has, I think, given Brethren evident signs of His being with them, especially in making them the chief instruments in promoting His truth and testimony for this day.

What but the Holy Spirit of God could have brought

out and upheld such a testimony to Christ as they have been giving for about forty-six years! That a mere handful of saints with God's testimony should have stood the assault of all parties, and the tremendous opposition of a hostile Christendom, and increased in numbers, power, and boldness, until they, at the present hour, hold their adversaries throughout the world in a state of siege, can be traced to nothing but to *their standing in the current of the Holy Ghost's acting* and yielding unquestioning obedience to Christ, and entire submission to the Holy Scriptures, having ceased entirely from man.

I only wish to have the truth of God in doctrine and position, and I think I have been enabled calmly and *without* bias of any sort to consider the case of "Exclusive Brethren;" and these are my thoughts regarding them.

It is not at all in the way of instructing you or taking any place of superiority that I have written; but your decision against "Brethren," coupling them with "Rome," compelled me to be equally decided in showing that there is nothing known to me that seems so right in position according to Scripture, and so far removed from "*Popery*."

I have confidence in your candour and love of the truth, and therefore I expect you calmly and prayerfully to consider what I have now written; and it would be a cause of boundless joy to hear from you that you had come to think along with me.