

AN OPEN LETTER

KENILWORTH, ENG., Feb. 24, 1903.

To Mr. B. C. Greenman:

MY DEAR BROTHER:—

I have read with much regret your article on "Fellowship" in the February number of "Field and Work;" first because of the renunciation of principles once regarded as divine, and, secondly, because of the misrepresentation of the views you object to in others.

Do you really mean it when you state "we set ourselves a task which He has never called us to perform, namely, that of examining each individual case that comes to us"? This used to be regarded as highly necessary on account of the evils prevailing in Christendom. Would you have the assemblies of the saints admit without question all who profess and call themselves Christians? Charity hopes that you mean no such thing, and that no such practise is in vogue amongst those in whose midst you labour; yet your words imply this, and nothing else. Surely you penned the sentences without serious thought! Further, you tell us that God has not set us the task of examining each assembly to which we may go, and imply a little higher up on the same page that God has established some other order for His house.

As you do not tell us what that order is, we are left to our own inferences, and in this the practise of many helps us not a little. Now, 2 Tim. ii. 22 most distinctly lays upon the individual believer the responsibility of discriminating as to the company he keeps here and there.

If I would do the will of God (and not walk according to some merely human rule) I am bound to examine and enquire as to companies of believers I may fall in with. The late J. N. D. used to say that Jer. xv. 19 first gave him a clue as to God's path in the midst of a ruined Christendom, and there we have substantially the same thing as in 2 Tim. ii., a distinguishing between the precious and the vile.

What other order has God established in His house, which you say the will of man in some refuses? What is the "dependence" of which you speak? As you do not tell us, we can only guess at your meaning by the practise which we believe you to approve, i. e. of walking by the light of a humanly compiled list of meetings. This completely nullifies the instructions of 2 Tim. ii., and reduces God's saints to a position of "dependence" truly, *but not upon God*. Man assumes to be the keeper of his brother's conscience, threatening him with the severest ecclesiastical discipline if he does not quietly submit to it.

To come to another point. You speak of "those who defend the principle of independent assemblies." If you refer to myself and others in a similar position, as seems evident, you have either entirely misunderstood us, or you are misrepresenting us. We recognize that, through God's grace we belong to the body of Christ, and we are

not willingly independent of one orthodox member of it. How different the principle which you approve! For example, you go into London where there are some 300 or 400 companies of believers gathered together on the first day of the week to break bread, and you visit *two small companies only*—those labelled “in fellowship with Reading” and apparently never allow the question to have a place in your mind, whether there may not be *at least some* others equally fit for the communion of one who would be faithful to Christ. To me, this is independency of the gravest kind. Is it not “pretension” also?

With regard to those assemblies that I was privileged to have fellowship with in America last year, I say nothing, save that I satisfied myself that neither evil doctrine or practises were tolerated amongst them.

It may interest you to know the circumstances which have led myself and hundreds of others in this country to look afresh at the word of God in regard to the fellowship of saints. During the course of some disputes raised by Mr. W. Kelly three or four years ago, that brother repeatedly referred to the late Mr. C. E. Stuart as a “heterodox” man, and a “blasphemer of Christ.” This was strongly objected to by many, whereupon a general division was forced by the revilers of their brethren. We who have been thus wickedly cast out are not free to recognize the few saints who received Mr. Stuart as the only saints fit for Christian communion, though quite willing to worship with them, not regarding them as abettors of fundamental error whatever their traducers may say. We are now in the peculiar position of being assailed by our old friends as “lax,” because of our willingness to accord you fellowship, and you on

your part assail us as "independents" because we are unable to accept your circle of fellowship as the only divine thing left on earth! What confusion, what wanton alienation has the will of man introduced amongst God's saints!

I trust you will find space for these few remarks in an early issue of your magazine.

Ever yours affectionately in Christ.

W. W. FEREDAY.

Mr. Greenman having declined to publish this letter, we now feel free, with Mr. Fereday's consent, to put it into print.

E. G. M.

South Brooklyn, N. Y., May, 1903.

