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difficult

No. 160.

F E L L O W S H I P .

An Address by Mr. P. W. Heward  
At Forest Gate, London, E. 7.  
6th April, 1912.

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1 John 1. The very word "FELLOWSHIP" must awaken thoughts of the wondrousness of God's grace, at least it must awaken such thoughts in the mind of the believer, growing in grace, if the Word is allowed to linger awhile in the meditation, - FELLOWSHIP. We had nothing in common with God, we were only evil continually, but now have we been brought into a fresh fellowship, and because of that fresh fellowship with God which is ever fresh in its refreshing fulness, we have a fellowship with one another, which is but part of the greater fellowship with God Himself.

How important it is that when speaking on the subject, we should have the devotional attitude that there might be the Spirit of fellowship and the fellowship of Spirit of which Philippians 2 speaks, lest in seeking to be more united we become more disunited, lest in seeking to learn more we only fail to draw near unto ~~the~~ Him Who alone can teach. The word fellowship has several meanings, (several aspects, shall I say). It is important to realize this from the first, you cannot take any word and give it only one meaning, it is necessary that in different contexts the same word should have different significations. This is often forgotten, and the result of forgetting it is a striving about words to no profit. I suppose that we recognize by God's grace that man by nature has not spirit, in one sense, for he is not born of the Spirit, yet we see no contradiction of the Divine statement that God would destroy all flesh wherein is the spirit of life. And if the word "spirit" can be used in two or three different meanings, may not the word "fellowship" be so employed also? It is important that we should emphasize this, otherwise some things that are said may appear to be sectarian, but if we once realize that fellowship has several aspects, both heavenly and earthly, that some concern a unity with the Lord, and that some concern a manifest unity, in this poor sinstained world: -once grasping this, we shall be saved from many errors and contentions of thought.

With those few preparatory words, and I trust with a desire that we all feel that each may wait on God, that He may teach, and that we may together wait on God that we may together learn, let us draw on to the subject. FIRST: Shall we take fellowship generally? in its Godward relation; in its manward relation. SECOND: Fellowship for special purposes,

that is to say, with respect to assemblies, ministry, prayer and so forth,  
THIRD: The spirit of fellowship in an assembly.

First, fellowship generally in its Godward and manward aspect, and the Godward aspect must be first of the first. In 1 Cor. 1:9 we are told "Faithful is God, through Whom ye were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord". Here we are told that all believers are called into that fellowship. This passage does not state that all believers are consciously and experimentally IN that fellowship, but that they are called into it. If you turn to 1 Thess. 2:12, you will find that a calling into sometimes emphasizes an object, and a prospect that is not immediately reached. There we read of walking worthily of God who calleth us into His own kingdom and glory, 2 Thess. 2:14, has the same calling into with respect to the wonderful belief of the truth and the obtaining of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Tim. 6:12, has the calling into with respect to eternal life viewed as future in its fruition, completion and climax. 1 Peter 2:19, speaks of a calling into, a path of suffering rejection, into which all of God's dear people do not enter, though thither they are called. Hence I should somewhat hesitate to say, that all God's dear children were in the fellowship of God's Son. The first Epistle of John plainly shows us that if we walk in the light we have fellowship (the purpose of God is sure), but the enjoyment of that purpose is oft linked with an "if". Eternal realities are fixed, but conscious anticipations of them are often dependent and variable. 1 John 1 is a wonderful treatise upon fellowship with God; there we have the Divine statement that Scripture is written that we might have fellowship with God. This does not belong to any man by nature, for by nature a man is an enemy of God as Romans 8 and James 4 alike show. But when there is a new birth, a Divine bringing near, then the object is fellowship, not merely relationship, but fellowship. Fellowship is an experimental word, a word that implies a consciousness, a word that indicates not merely a Divine appointment, but a Divine participation, hence the stress on the "if" in 1 John 1. As to the further thought of fellowship with God, we have in Philippians 3, the way in which the Apostle speaks about his object in life. Verse 10. "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the FELLOWSHIP of His sufferings". Oh, how wondrous it seems, not only to have fellowship with God, but to have a fellowship with Christ in His rejectedness outside the camp, to feel that we go forth, not to an IT,

but a HIM, and that HIM the only HIM who is worthy of the attraction that His people feel for him and is worthy of more than all their attraction, for He is worthy of all glory and honor. Oh, that it may be, beloved friends, that we not only think of this fellowship, in its Godward aspect, with God the Father, God the Son, in the power of God the Holy Spirit, we may not only think of it, but enjoy it, even now. You remember how the apostle in 2 Cor. 14 says "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you", - fellowship with the Triune God, this is the privilege of those who were by nature children of wrath, even as others.

Are there any questions or thoughts upon that first section? (none) We pass along then to consider fellowship in relationship to man, I mean the believer's fellowship. By nature we were, despite certain glosses and appearances otherwise, "HATEFUL AND HATING ONE ANOTHER", but now we have been born again it is for us to realize what should be our true relationship to other men. This must be divided up into two sections. (All our divisions seem to need subdivisions this afternoon.)

First, our relationship to men naturally, to men in the flesh. 2 Cor. 6 is clear. We are there told that we are not to become unequally yoked with unbelievers, for "what participation hath righteousness with lawlessness, or what fellowship hath light toward darkness? Or what symphony is there of Christ and Belial, or what part hath one who hath faith with one who hath not faith?" Here we see then that those who are the Lord's people are to have no fellowship with those who are filled with unfruitful works of darkness. Men are by nature full of dead bones, and the believer must beware lest he touch death, and so become defiled. Numbers 19 is precious in its typical teaching. We are to be courteous toward the world but we cannot have fellowship - neither in our manner toward them, nor in our business or political relationships with them. Partnership and co-operation, in business, with the unsaved are unbecoming the Lord's people. It is important to realize that we can buy and sell from unsaved ones. That is not fellowship. It is even indicated in the time of Nehemiah, when Nehemiah was laying a stress on Israel having no fellowship with those who breke the sabbath, that they were allowed to buy from them in the ordinary way. In like manner service to an earthly unbelieving master is not fellowship. It is a business transaction. There is a just equivalent; that is the idea. But any partnership, any engaging

in business in a little way, whether it be in relation to financial profits, or to a benefit society or to a co-operative organization, or for political purposes or for social amusements, - any of these things must be unbecoming those who are in Christ Jesus, and separated from the world. Sometimes God may call to a separatedness manifestly in a peculiar way, as with Abraham, who was brought out from his city into an EVIDENT pilgrim life. We have in like manner the calling forth from Babylon's city in Rev. 18:4. Though God was displeased with Lot for dwelling in Sodom He has not instructed His people to come forth from the cities of the world at the present time. Indeed I suppose flight from cities is delayed for the Lord's redeemed until about the time of Antichrist's manifestation of himself.

When we pass next to consider our fellowship in relationship to saved men, there is a blessed change of thought. Jude speaks of a common salvation, and the word "common" is, of course, as the word "fellowship" in its root. This salvation is "common" to all who have passed out of death into life, and therefore a new birth brings about a family relationship which must involve a certain feeling of fellowship, for we have glory in common as a prospect, and we have Christ, in common as a Present Possession. Every believer is in Christ having been brought out of death into life, and represented in Christ at the right hand of God. But having said this we feel that there are become distinctions between believers, and that it is quite possible for a believer to put himself in a position in which the fellowship that one would desire to show him cannot be manifested. "Whosoever wishes to be the friend of the world makes himself stand as God's enemy". Though he is not God's enemy, he makes himself stand as that, he puts himself in the wrong position even though he be a child of God by birth. "Awake thou that sleepest and rise up from among the dead" implies that the Lord's people may sleep among the dead, and so be, in measure, identified with ~~many~~ them, nor can we go to them in a way that would identify ourselves with evil. The Scripture in Jeremiah seems to have an application "Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them". Thus while there is the general thought of a fellowship, and a prayer for all saints, as they are in the purpose of God, and by the separating work of grace, and while there is the thought of a general fellowship in view of that glory soon to dawn, there are many limitations in the manifestation of this, and in the enjoyment of this, while believers

are wandering from their Lord.

Are there any points or questions concerning that?

Q. Take the case of a miner, for instance, who would go to work in the ordinary way, but under present conditions, owing to the strike he is compelled through fear to abstain.

A. If one is compelled physically to abstain from doing what is right, I do not think he is responsible, but if there is anything short of physical compulsion, there becomes a certain approximation to fellowship although it is a difficult position. (Recently simple faith has been illustrated - necessarily - in work during a strike).

Q. It will become still more difficult.

A. Undoubtedly. I suppose that all the unionism will head up, until the edict of Satan, that only those who have the mark of the beast can buy and sell, will have its fuller development.

Q. You must be in a trade union now, or you won't be recognized.

A. Practically. The one thing is only a stepping stone to the other. Believers should surely count the cost, and lose much "recognition".

Q. As to a director of a company, who, though a paid servant, might be required to hold shares?

A. The holding of shares would constitute a fellowship.

Q. (other questions were put.)

A. Some of these points are difficult to decide in the abstract. My own position is this, that I would rather the Lord's people be very much outside, than appear to be on the edge of a precipice, because of the importance of bearing a true witness as to separatedness, but I can quite understand circumstances would come along where one's remuneration would seem practically a return for one's energy. Yet we must never try to persuade our conscience at all.

Q. As to investing in banks?

A. The interest is fixed, it is simply a repayment for what you give, there is no sharing in the arrangement or organization of it. (The effect of such principles as Matt. 6:19 is another, and important subject.)

Q. As to the State insurance?

A. I do not quite know how it will effect the Lord's people, I do not know whether brethren have studied the Act, but I should be inclined to think that the present day arrangement of the national insurance practi-

cally becomes a tax, and that "Tribute to who tribute is due" would apply.

Now we approach fellowship among believers for special purposes, first for assembly purposes. As to fellowship for assembly purposes, I am sure you realize how important it is, and our hearty desire is that the Lord would lead us in a plain path because of those who observe us. A few introductory thoughts may help to clear the way. There is a distinctness between the arrangements of fellowship at the first and when failure came in, a distinction, not in Divine purpose, not in Divine arrangement, but a distinction which you will well understand if we just recollect this fact. At Pentecost there were no sects, there were no divisions, it was impossible to find in the Pentecost period believers who "met" in different ways. There was not this denomination and that denomination, consequently the believer who meets on lines contrary to the lines of God's word is an anomaly with reference to the Book of the Acts. There were no sects then. You notice in Acts 2 we have brought before us the way, in which all who believed confessed the Lord in an appointed way, and having received the truth they were gladly received, they were added. All the multitude of them that believed were together, as Acts 4 goes on to tell us, but in 2 Timothy which I suppose is the first Book in Scripture which brings before us the existence of a sect, we find all who were in Asia had turned away from Paul, not necessarily from confessing Christ as Saviour, but they had turned away from Paul, and the Lord's path. It is the first ~~E~~ Epistle that speaks of the existence of a sect. There it is no longer the unity of all saints but "Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Tim. 2:22) and the added words concerning those who have foolish and unlearned questions, concerning those who oppose themselves being brought to repentance and being recovered "out of the SNARE of the Devil" - those added words imply fairly plainly that there were plenty of believers who were not marked by calling on the Lord out of a pure heart. I use the term believers in its widest sense, - they were not faithful ones, in its secondary meaning, this is no alteration of Divine teaching, but based on that which was illustrated even as far back as the Epistle to the Corinthians, for there we find one who was put out of an assembly, and was yet a saved one. Put out, because he did not manifest Salvation, and one gets to the underlying thought that

the fellowship is of those who make manifest that they are the Lord's people, and then that leads on to the further thought that you cannot tell who are the Lord's people in a good many surroundings, hence there needs to be a severance first, to tell who are, and who are not, therefore it is only a development of the principle in Acts for there it was the natural thing to join the one assembly of the redeemed, or rather to be joined to it. A second preparatory thought, we need to be guarded against the current errors which influence us even before we know it. The broadness of today, that likes to welcome everyone is misnamed, love, and kindness, and charity, but has a dangerous effect on the Lord's people, and the socialism of the present day which levels has a dangerous effect. It practically suggests that anyone can welcome anyone, and thus rules out the hedge round about God's garden and the due welcoming in godly order. A third preparatory point. I think it is important that we should seek by God's grace to be agreed concerning underlying principles. They are not the greatest difficulty, the putting into practice is the greater difficulty, but if, by grace we are brought to consider the underlying principles apart from the putting into practice, though not parted from it, but to consider them first, we shall often-times have help from the Lord that will be used by Him to guide us when it comes to the putting into practice. This is not only more helpful in understanding the truth, but it also enables us to consider this subject, to some extent divested of personal surroundings. Naturally the thought that comes up into the mind of all of us is how we shall act aright in the assembly God graciously seems to have brought together, but that introduces certain practical difficulties which are important but which are better considered after we have viewed the general principles which would concern any assembly in these days, even if it were a hundred or a thousand miles away from here. Let us seek to become clear on these general principles and then we shall know how to apply them to ourselves.

Q. You mean a right assembly?

A. Yes, dear brother, any Scriptural assembly.

Now as to the general principles, may I enumerate a few? All saved ones ought to be gathered together. I suppose we agree on that, that all saved ones ought to be together. You know how some have said that the gathering of the Lord's people and the fellowship expressed in the breaking of bread are for all believers who are walking rightly and are sound

on fundamentals, but when you ask what fundamentals are, you find that man has a tendency to set up a standard of his own as to what is fundamental and what is not, and the definition is only begging the question and avoiding the difficulty. I do not say intentionally, but that becomes the tendency. If however, we obtain the general principle that all saved ones ought to be there, and do not go a step further for the time being, I am sure our prayer will be that God will remove the obstacles from many of His beloved servants that they may be united manifestly before the world, that there may be the power of which John 17 speaks.

A second general principle is, that attitude, not knowledge is the basis of fellowship. You understand what I mean by the basis. The basis of course, in the fuller sense, is the finished work of the Lord Jesus. It has sometimes been said that life, not light, welcomes to fellowship. This is, in one sense quite true, but life may be hindered by being among the dead, and therefore you cannot tell whether there is life or not. I gravely question whether we can take the general statement, "life not light" and make that the basis, for how do we know life except by its manifestation? If the underlying thought is that it is not an amount of knowledge which welcomes to fellowship, not clearness on certain points of teaching, but a right attitude of discipleship toward the Lord, then I think we shall be of one mind. ATTITUDE not knowledge. Attitude not a great progress in acquaintance with the deep things of God, for a young believer who has the simple attitude of a disciple is welcome to the gatherings of the Lord: - it must be so, in fact the young believer who has very little knowledge may be in a preferable condition to the one who is grown up and possesses a vast amount of good knowledge, and a vast amount of bad knowledge mixed with it, because this may hinder the right attitude. Attitude toward the Lord is all important. There must be the manifestation of character, for one cannot see life which is invisible, and of course this thought of attitude involves the idea of a scriptural examination to see if the spiritual attitude is there, - but I do not want for one moment any to go away with the thought that admission to the gathering of the Lord's people depends on another kind of examination. I do not think we can make a general fixed rule and say anybody who agrees on these points is welcome to fellowship. This is like saying anyone who secures seventy percent of marks in an examination will be allowed to

come in, which seems so repugnant to a child of God, who knows anything of the work of the Holy Spirit. It is ATTITUDE, not proficiency which introduces as a manifest saved one into the gathering of the Lord's people. The one who is weak in the faith may be much more ignorant than another one, and yet be far more manifestly a child of God, and thus be welcomed because of a right attitude and a right manifestation of character. I think if we once grasp this principle it would clear away most of the difficulties that surround welcoming.

A third general principle is that the gathering of the redeemed is to be anticipatory of the gathering that Day when we shall be at the marriage Supper of the Lamb. The Lord's Supper as it were, prophesies the supper of the lamb, and, as the parable of Luke 14 shows, there are certain different positions in that day with respect to the marriage Supper of the Lamb and so there must be godly order as to the gathering of the Lord's redeemed now. That which is prophetic of the marriage supper of the Lamb, should of necessity, seek to have within it those who will be at that marriage Supper. Yet one may, on earth, exclude himself from a position which the Lord will grant unto Him in resurrection. The case of Moses, not entering into the land of earth is a very striking instance.

A fourth general principle is that fellowship in an assembly sense, in a church sense, is a question of contract, if I might thus bring it down to a business term, that is to say, it includes an act of fellowship on both sides, an act of fellowship which involves all who are connected with it, and as such everything should be manifest, ~~xxx~~ that there should not be a rushing into it without realizing the consequences. Fellowship is not to be merely an expression of emotion, or the work of an impulse or the act of a moment, but it means a thoughtful businesslike contract before God. The assembly takes a responsibility, the individual bears his share in the responsibility of the assembly.

Another important principle is that the assembly belongs to the Lord. It seems a very common-place statement, but if only we realize more the position of the Lord, most of our difficulties will be cleared away. The assembly belongs to the Lord, the receiving is His, not ours, except as the expression of that which is His. This is the natural principle of the church. "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall have been bound in heaven". We are to receive, because God has received. There is only

to be the expression of what the Lord does, and of what the Lord wants, it is important to lay a great stress upon the Lord. The adding in the early church, was not to the church, it was to the Lord. We read in Acts 2 concerning the adding that they were "added" in verse 41, but "unto them" is in italics, and one always dreads italics, and in verse 47 the words "To the church" are not in the original manuscripts. "The Lord added daily on to the same object" (epi to auto) "such as were being saved". In Acts 5:24 "Believers were the more ADDED TO THE LORD". Acts 11:24 "Much people was ADDED TO THE LORD" the adding was to the Lord. This is so important because it has a wonderful bearing on days of ruin. Though the church cease, the Lord does not cease and it clears up many of our difficulties. I mean the church ceasing as a corporate executive body on earth, not ceasing in the purpose of God or its heavenly aspects.

This leads to a further thought in relation to the same principle, it is the Lord's table and not ours. If it were ours, I am sure we should make it wider, at least I feel that would be my tendency. It is simply because it is the Lord's table that we have to be careful and jealous for His glory and to keep only to His arrangements. The Lord's table is not to be degraded to the manifestation of our kindness, for though our kindness is excellent in its place, it is in the wrong place altogether, when we bring it forward against the Lord's laws to show our interest in somebody by welcoming him to the Lord's table, or to manifest a desire not to offend by greeting in this solemnly important way. It is the Lord's table and not ours. I know no term that is more inclusive and more exclusive, than the term "the Lord's table".

Another important principle is that all in fellowship should be satisfied that there is the Lord's appointed caution in welcoming. This really depends upon what has already been said as to a contract, and you can well see the effect of it is that there must be godly understanding of what is the Lord's will, and that those who are in a measure of fellowship with the Lord must test those who desire to come into fellowship, that all may be satisfied there is no haphazard welcoming that all may be content that there is at least a reasonable care lest there should be fellowship with ungodly ones, or lest there should be any fellowship which would hinder the manifestation of that which the Lord has appointed.

A further important principle is this. In passing out of a condi-

tion of share in ruin and in a transitional period, when seeking to get back to the Lord's arrangements, there must be usually a certain narrowing. I think you will follow what I mean if I put it this way. That which is only just coming before God's people now, will, if the Lord spares us ten years, be clear to a large number of the Lord's people, and therefore sin against it then would be far more grievous than sin against it now. I take it 'tis the same in connection with any measure of reviving that the Lord gave in the early part of last century. When first there was the enjoyment of that reviving there was only a gradual coming into the understanding of what it meant, but now that the Lord has made clear certain portions of His truth which were then emphasized, if not revived, to go against those portions of truth becomes increasingly solemn, and increasingly sinful. Sin increases the more knowledge is manifested, therefore when the Lord revives His people a greater narrowness will seem a less narrowness, because instead of the narrowness excluding, the Lord will narrow His people, that they will all be included or a large number of them. Thus will the Holy Spirit draw together, for this is prophesied. Let us not be weary in the time of waiting.

Passing from those general principles, we come to the points who should be admitted, the manner of admitting, and who are responsible for the admitting.

Who should be admitted? Precious names are given in Scripture of those who are welcomed not simply to the table of the Lord, (for that term is contrary to Scripture). Observe it is welcoming into the fellowship with all its responsibilities, as well as simply one expression of it. The names given to those who are welcomed to the gatherings of the Lord's redeemed are indeed suggestive. We not only have in Acts 2 "Those that gladly received the word" and the "Believers" added to the Lord in Acts 5, but in 2nd Tim. 2 the statements are clear. Those that are characterized by calling on the Lord out of a pure heart, let the words be repeated. - "CALLING ON THE LORD OUT OF A PURE HEART". You know the stress on this "pure heart" in the Epistles that deal with failure. Verse 5 "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a PURE HEART, and a good conscience and of faith unfeigned from which some having swerved have turned aside into vain jangling". It does not say they are unsaved ones. But they have erred as to the pure heart, so in 19 and 20 "Holding

faith and a good conscience, which some having put away concerning the faith have made shipwreck, of whom in Hymeneas and Alexander whom I have delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme." It is not stated that they are unbelievers. Turning back to 2 Tim. 2 we read in the 25th verse "In meekness instructing those who oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil (who are taken alive by him) into the will of That One". There is a parenthesis of course. "Who are taken captive (alive) by him" should be in a parenthesis. It is recovering "Into the will of that One" namely the will of the Lord. OUT OF the snare of the devil INTO the will of the Lord. Now "the snare of the devil" is, I believe, one Divine description of a sect. You recollect how that the Lord said through Paul in Acts 20, not merely would grievous wolves enter in, not sparing the flock, but also of themselves should arise men speaking perverse things, to draw aside the disciples after them. That was distinctly sectarian, but they were believers apparently. "Of your own selves shall men arise". Now that was the tendency of the overseers, and the apostle in 1st Tim. 3, says, referring to the overseers, "He must have a good report of them that are without lest he fall into reproach and a snare of the devil". The SNARE OF THE DEVIL is particularly linked among other things with the stepping forth to form some arrangements contrary to the will of God. The description of a true assembly in the last days is THE SPHERE OF THE LORD'S WILL, - "The will of That One". The description of a sect is "A SNARE OF THE DEVIL". Here we have those who are saved apparently, - or at least among them there are some who are saved, because they are distinctly said to be taken alive by the devil as the margin shows, - not simply taken as dead ones, but taken alive. They are living believers, but they need to recover themselves to awake from that drunken sleep in the snare of the devil. I know of no wandering believers than 2nd Tim. 2:26, Out of the snare of the devil, into the will of God, even the will of That One. What a blessed change? Those words clearly bring before us that the welcome of the Lord's people is to those who are brought out of a snare of the devil. While one <sup>head of</sup> remains a member <sup>of</sup> of a sect, or ~~in any way identified with it~~ he cannot be strictly welcomed into a sphere of the Lord's will. There must be a recovering them <sup>but each case needs personal prayer & care (Gal 22, 23) so that no</sup> DISCIPLE <sup>is kept out through ignorance or sin</sup>

selves, an awakening from a drunken sleep, a coming to soberness before there can be the welcoming to the sphere of the Lord's will.

This lays a stress upon the right attitude, subjection to the Lord's will. Revelation 2, I think, also brings before us who should be admitted, it shows there certain ones who hold false teaching, and the angel of the Lord is blamed for their presence in the assembly. It does not say whether they are saved or not, he is blamed for their presence in the assembly. It is an assembly now of those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. To embrace everyone, or to wish to embrace everyone in days of ruin without due concern for godliness of character is to lose the Divine teaching, and to be sectarian, though professedly unsectarian, for it would exclude those who want to carry out the Lord's will in its fulness. The later Scriptures are clear, that there are certain ones who, by sleeping in sin, by identification with snares of the devil, by holding a false teaching whether they proclaim it or not ("Those who hold the doctrine of Balaam"), are unfit for the fellowship of the Lord's people in an assembly unto His glory.

As to the manner of admitting, Scripture does not give us forms and ceremonies, nor do we seek to add to it. The important point to us as believers is to see that everything is done in godly order to impress all concerned that there may be the welcoming in the name of the Lord. You recollect how the expression was used in Acts 5. "But of the rest durst no man join himself to them but believers were added to the Lord multitudes both of men and women". There is to be a manifestation that this is not an act of the flesh, this is not an act of the man, not merely a gliding into fellowship, but there is a real welcome. One hesitates to say whether the Scriptural expression "The right hand of fellowship" (in Galatians 2 as to fellowship in ministry) should be applied in connection with the welcoming to the gathering of the Lord's redeemed, but there should be a manifestation that it is a distinct act and a stepping out, either from the world of sin, or the snare of the devil, into the sphere of the will of God. We have, perhaps, after a natural revolt from forms and ceremonies, had an inclination to approve too much of a gliding into an assembly which is hardly in accord with Divine stress upon the importance of this solemn step. That which is lightly entered is lightly thrown off. That which is realized in its solemnity before God will

affect the whole of one's after life, as we walk in the Spirit.

As to THE PERSONS ADMITTING. May I first of all remind you that the term "CHURCH" alludes to the type of the assembly of Israel, and that when any had been excluded even from the camp of Israel, they were welcomed back with due formality, being duly attested. Moreover, the term "Assembly" is a Grecian word which relates to the freemen of a city, and no-one glided without due welcoming by due responsibility into a church in its Grecian aspect. Passing more directly to the Scriptures we find in Acts 9 a little guidance in the welcoming of Paul. In verse 27 Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and how He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. God overruled, in the absence of any communication from the saints at Damascus to the saints at Jerusalem, - God overruled it to give us a little indication as to how one would be welcomed. Not merely by his own word but in accord with the investigation of one who could be trusted, and Barnabas did not act merely alone, but he went to the highest ones he could find in Scriptural authority in that district; he took him to the APOSTLES. I think we shall find a key to a great many Scriptures, that as the gathering is unto the LORD, and as the LORD is the One in authority, the welcoming will be by any who have more distinct responsibility from the Lord in the district. If there happens to be in a district one of more responsibility from the Lord at one time than at another time, that one will act when present. Let me illustrate what I mean. If Paul and Timothy were in the same district I can hardly imagine Timothy seeing to the welcoming into fellowship; he would naturally leave that to Paul. But if Paul were away I could well understand Timothy having this responsibility from the Lord laid on his shoulders. It is not ~~xxx~~ a matter of attaining a certain office merely, but it is rather a question of representing the Lord, and as the Lord gives different gifts, the more authoritative gift there is present will do the welcoming because it is simply the Lord's work, and thus this rules out all self-exaltation.

Acts 11 still further explains. At Antioch men of Cyprus and Cyrene preached the Lord Jesus (verse 20) and a great number were turned unto the Lord. Tidings came to the Church at Jerusalem and they at once sent forth Barnabas, the very man who had been the means of welcoming Paul was sent forth here, and "When he had seen the grace of God was glad, and exhorted

them all—that with purpose of heart they would cleave to the Lord". And not till he had done that was there adding to the Lord. They had turned to the Lord further up, but not till verse 24, when Barnabas appeared, were they added to the Lord. This is a very important passage because it deals with welcoming in the absence of any one of the apostles. They did not act on the authority of those who were simply travelling about to preach, they waited till Barnabas arrived. It was the first church from among Gentiles the second gathering that is called a church (next after the church at Jerusalem). Here surely we have Divine guidance, shewing the great care that was exercised. Barnabas not only saw the grace of God, but he exhorted them with purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord, and then they were welcomed after that. They were "ADDED" afterwards. There was a considerable slowness, but not a delay.

In Acts 14:22 we find that Paul and Barnabas having been to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch before, came back to those places and confirmed the souls of the disciples. On their first visit there is nothing about a church being formed. On their second visit, where we have the confirming and exhorting them to continue in the faith we find at once there is the statement of elders being appointed in the Church. A church position is connected with the confirming and establishing in the faith ON THE SECOND VISIT, NOT ON THE FIRST.

I might mention in passing that I believe that this reminds of the basis of a tradition which includes a perversion in connection with Anglican confirmation. I believe that the bishop of Anglicanism has really trespassed on the sphere of the evangelist in Scripture, and that his visitations and that his welcomings are really trespassing on the position of the evangelist, but that just in passing.

Acts 16:5 is very important. We find here that Paul and Silas were going through Syria and Cilicia confirming the Churches, and it adds "And so were the Churches established in the faith and increased in number daily" How were they increased in number daily? Through Paul and Silas visiting them. This was how there was the numerical increase, - through the visitation of Paul and Silas.

A second point that helps to decide as to the persons admitting is from the Divine teaching as to EXCLUSION. We should naturally conclude that admission and exclusion would be, in some measure at least, linked with

the same persons. We find Paul laying a stress in 1 Cor. 5, on the exclusion being not only by the Church but in fellowship with himself. "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ". "When ye are gathered together", - there was the Church identification. "And my spirit". And beyond all there was "the power of our Lord Jesus Christ", that He might be the exalted One. So Paul further on says, "Whom I have delivered to Satan". This is remarkable, because even when writing to Timothy he speaks thus. As though Timothy would not, naturally, take the position when Paul was there. But when Paul was about to pass off out of this world he said, "I am ready to be offered". "Do the work of an evangelist" "FOR I am ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand". Timothy was to carry on his work more fully after he had left. While Paul was alive Paul naturally expected Timothy to lean on him, and to act in holy dependence and fellowship with him.

In Titus we find that Titus was instructed to rebuke sharply, - APOTOMOS, - "cutting off-ly". There was a certain authority given to Titus in connection with exclusion. Scripture does not exactly say "cutting off" but "cutting off-ly", - in a manner that cuts off. (Titus 1:13.)

We find in 2 Cor. 13 that Paul distinctly states his authority in this matter (verse 10) "Therefore I write these things being absent lest being present I should use sharpness (that which is in a cutting-off way) which the Lord hath given me". But the desired goal of it was not destruction, the goal was really edification, - that was the object.

Furthermore, we have much guidance from the Book of Revelation. We find there the "angel" of the church, and NOT the church, is made responsible for those who are present in the assembly. Surely one must infer that the angel of the church was, therefore, responsible for the admission. "THOU HAST THEM THERE" that thou oughtest not to have there. If the teaching was wrong we can well understand the angel having authority, but it is not only so. It is not only if they are teaching, but "thou hast them there", and "thou" art blamed for it. This, therefore, implies that the angels of the church would act, JOHN being shut up in Patmos at this time and therefore unable to act. The word "angel" is a shortened form of "evangelist" angels being apparently representatives and individuals in each assembly. These angels in the absence of the mention of bishops, it would seem (in the withholding not only of certain gifts in a widespread

way, but even of certain kinds of offices, to a large extent;) - these angels (or messengers as the word is) were to act more individually. There is no Scriptural example of one ~~man~~ elder in an assembly, always two or more are implied. But some had failed to act, and were rebuked for so doing, or rather, for so failing to do. One can well understand how this divine principle would be misused, and how that instead of their being an acceptance of the responsibility from the Lord there would come in a Diotrephes who would LOVE the pre-eminence, and would cast out of the Church on his own responsibility and initiative. That is to say, that which God appointed would be the very thing to be misused by Satan's working, to bring in a Diotrephes. Prelatism is Satan's working, to bring in a Diotrephes. Prelatism is Satan's travesty of God's discipline. We can well understand in connection with this stress on those having the greater authority welcoming, that an inspired apostle was peculiarly careful, and all earnest saved ones should be, that man might not be exalted. Even as to Baptism he said "I do not baptize for the most part lest any should say I baptized in my OWN name". So he laid stress wherever he could on the fellowship of the Lord's people, and to exalt them lest men should exalt him. But when with pride they began to take away his appointed authority he had to emphasize it for the Lord's sake, though he found it the most painful part of his life. He said "Ye have compelled me". The difficulty was a strange one. His very desire to bring his fellowship most manifestly to a level with them, made them level him in a way that grieved God, and he had to assert the responsibility and authority which God had given into his charge.

Q. Would bishops and elders admit?

A. First we notice that the Lord laid a stress upon elders in the early Church, and more particularly when failure first came in, but when failure developed still more in the second epistle to Timothy, there are no elders mentioned, and the Book of Revelation there are no elders <sup>in</sup> in the earthly churches. In like manner now we must sorrowfully acknowledge that we are without elders.

Q. Did they cease in ruin with Israel?

A. In Ezekiel we find them, but they were in a very unsatisfactory state. They had idols in their hearts. National elders could exist without spirituality. It is a contrast now. It is a spiritual family. Spiritual responsibilities involve spiritual preparations.

In the early Church the elders evidently were the helpers of the evangelist, and evangelist having a district and the elders being local in churches. That is how one reads Timothy and Titus. It is quite a perversion of the translation to put at the end of Timothy and Titus that they were the bishops. Timothy and Titus were not bishops, they were the evangelists, and had districts in both cases.

Q. An evangelist then is successor to an apostle?

A. I believe that apostolical succession to bishops is simply a travesty and perversion of it. The great stress on the "FOR" of 2 Tim. 4, I think illustrates something of what you say. Then there comes the further step in Revelation. You have the shortened form of evangelists, and they seem more limited in their districts there. They are no longer called "evangelists" generally, but "angels" OF the Church. The "OF the Church" seems always to localize to some extent, and I think the thought is this, that God in His grace gave a measure of usefulness and authority even in days of failure, but that sin is already cutting short the power of the Lord's people.

Q. Would Paul be an evangelist in addition to being an apostle?

A. I suppose that the words of Eph. 4 imply that it would be so. We find apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. But apostles and prophets are called foundation gifts. The apostle was to the prophet what the evangelist was to the pastor and teacher. And one may sum it up: - The apostle was a prophet plus executive power, in the same manner as an evangelist was a teacher plus executive power. Taking the other way of viewing it, - The ~~A~~postle was an evangelist plus certain extra supernatural powers; the Prophet was a teacher plus certain extra supernatural powers. So it would seem from the parallelism there. The responsibility of the ~~elders~~<sup>elders</sup> is rather to feed those who have been already welcomed. "Feed the flock of God which is among you" says Acts 20. There is not the thought of welcoming or excluding there stated, nor in 1 Tim. 3, but rather that they should take care over the church of God. Their work was rather to deal with those who had been welcomed in.

Q. In Israel's day the elder had the work of carrying out the judgment, did they not?

A. In measure I believe they did (mark the plural). If we turn to Deuteronomy we shall see a little hint from the Lord in the matter. (Deut. 17)

We have first of all the two or three witnesses in verse 6 which is plainly alluded to in Church discipline in the epistle to Timothy. Then in verse 8 "If there arise a matter too hard for thee thou shalt come to the priests the Levites, the judge that shall be in those days, and they shall tell thee the sentence of judgment". So we see the elders always seem to realize a certain localizing, and there was a court of appeal. As we find "Against an elder receive not an accusation but Before two or three witnesses". The elders rather had the local responsibility, and thus the evangelist helped (May I use an expression without linking it with worldly affairs?) in a Court of Appeal, - from the elders. Church courts are I believe another travesty and perversion. If you want to understand Church arrangements I believe you have an illustration by contrast in nearly everything of the so-called English Church.

Q. As regards the elders, would not an evangelist from the very fact of his being in charge of a large district be dependent upon elders for information as to those who should be admitted? Would it not be impossible for an evangelist to look carefully into the character of everyone who wished to be admitted?

A. I think that is true. I think that the welcoming was in the early Church in the same way as through Barnabas. He came; he saw the grace of God; he was in harmony with God sufficiently to quickly test it, and he doubtless realized that those men of Cyprus and Cyrene (some of them of the very island from which he had come, whom he probably knew) were men not apt to be led astray. He would naturally confer with them, and depend a good deal on them, but his action would corroborate theirs.

Q. Of course this leads on ~~in~~ to one further important point. The suggestion may be made, - Is the reception by the officers of the assembly (to use the term "officers" though not desirable) or by the assembly?

A. There should be no contrast between the two. The assembly is one whole, and if I talk my mouth talks; if I hear my ear hears; an idea of a contrast between the two shows there is something wrong in the spirituality.

Q. What is meant by "And my spirit"?

A. Paul could not be personally present by body, so he sent a letter and he was spiritually present represented by the letter if one might so express it. The letter represented himself, and the spirit was where his body could not be; don't you think so?

Q. A strange expression, is it not?

A. He wanted to emphasize that his body could not be there.

Q. Are we to take it that when God graciously revives, there will not be so much of the "individual"?

A. Reviving makes fellowship far more possible. Anyone that seeks presumptuously in the world or in Christendom, at the present time to have authority is doing the very thing that hinders authority. If one seeks influence that is the very thing that will unfit him for influence in an assembly. It must be received, not snatched hold of. Of course there should be the true seeking in one sense, "If a man seek the office of a bishop" (or seek oversight) "He yearns after a good work", and I think we should yearn after being useful to the Lord.

Q. As to the "sphere of the Lord's will"? (2 Tim. 2:26).

A. That passage "Out of the snare of the devil...into the will of that One" is a most striking passage to my mind. It seems to give such a rest to a child of God seeing that an assembly now is not coextensive with those who bear the name of Christ, that there must be a giving up of relationship to sects first. This leads on to the important point of what a sect is. The present day idea seems to be that a sect is a section. I do not think that is a true thought. It is a sect wherever it is away from the Lord's will. A sect does not depend on number but on character. Ten believers carrying out the Lord's will would not be a sect; five hundred thousand choosing for themselves would be a sect. A "sect" is when it is "sectioned" from the Lord, - from His arrangements.

Q. If we were asked whether we were a sect, what would you answer?

A. I should tell them it is our desire by the grace of God to keep to the will of God.

Q. When you say you do not take any particular name, many seem to think you must have a name.

A. Nearly all names have been perverted by misuse.

As to a certain delay in welcoming, in days of weakness, 2 Timothy seems again suggestive. We seem to get the story of the way in which the Lord brings some back to Himself in these verses from 23 onwards. "But foolish and unlearned questions ask aside knowing that they do gender strifes, and the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness disciplining those who place them-

selves opposite; peradventure God may give them repentance to the knowledge of the truth, and that they should recover themselves out of the snare of the devil". There seems a godly progress, bringing them OUT from the wrong position, till, via repentance, they are brought INTO the will of the Lord.

Q. How do you take these? Those who are sought out? Or those that we come across in daily life?

A. Both, if the Lord calls you to seek any out.

Q. In Timothy's time I suppose they would be those he met with in the course of his daily life?

A. I suppose those spoken of here primarily would be those who had been in fellowship with Paul, and turned away from him, - who had been in Church fellowship with Timothy, and if he met them afterwards of course they wanted to quarrel over words, but he, the servant of the Lord, was to be gentle toward them, but not to compromise with them. He was to instruct them in meekness. NO COMPROMISE, but "in meekness instructing".

Q. Would they be the same class as in 2 Cor. "Come out from among them and be ye separate"?

A.. I suppose the Korah, Dathan and Abiram passage of the earlier Scriptures comes to mind. They were nominally professed Christians, but in 2 Corinthians there is more the stress on the UNGODLINESS of character. In Timothy there is more stress on the sectarianism of position, and leaving Paul, and the leaving of true doctrine.

Q. Has 2 Cor. 6, to do with Judaism?

A. It includes the principles. Judaism is only one expression of them.

Q. Are bishops to admit or exclude on their own responsibility?

A. It may be God would honor this in an emergency, if they were strangely cut off from others, but He has given usual arrangements in His Word.

Q. But there is an appeal beyond a bishop, or an elder?

A. I think everything in Scripture arrangements is really to go to the Lord, and, therefore, whatever authority He has given on earth, you go to the highest one you can reach. That sums up simply the principle, and that is such a comforting assurance as to the Lord's dear people in the days of wide departure when they do not know to whom to go. In the absence of authorities and in the absence of churches the Lord dealt graciously with His people in days gone by. He can be a little sanctuary to them in

all places to which He permits them to be driven. The Holy Spirit is living. I always like to see the expression of fellowship in connection with welcoming. On more than one occasion we have arranged for brethren here in fellowship one with another to go and have a talk with any thinking about fellowship, and explain to them what is meant. The usual thing was to arrange for two brethren to go together. I have thought that was rather more strictly correct than letting one go alone. (Both individual and united conversations have been arranged since). Then they came to have a talk with me concerning their talks, and so we sought to go through it slowly and cautiously to the glory of God.

Q. A great deal depends on the faithfulness of those two brethren?

A. It does. But do forget they would act in fellowship in prayer with others, and, furthermore, others would have seen something of the one seeking fellowship, and I should have seen him as well, so there would be more than a three-fold cord, which I trust would be acceptable to the Lord. I am inclined to think that the need of the present day is to have more stress on the privilege of being welcomed, and the more definite cutting off from "cuttings off", I mean from sects. I do not mean mere form, but there should be more godly order, and a manifest welcoming in. Half the disorder and schism in a Christian assembly seems linked with a failure in welcoming. If there is a strictness and a discipline and a realization of what it means at the outset, it may affect the whole relationship of saint toward saint, and of saint toward any who teach and have authority from the Lord for the whole time afterwards. Cover it up at the outset, and it reaches confusion afterwards. It advances at first and loses at the end, and has the appearance perhaps of untruthfulness at the end.

Q. Would you consider those who have been brought up in Christendom and saved there, and not been brought into a position of a Scriptural assembly, - would you consider them to be in the snare of the devil?

A. Yes, but they have not stepped into it so suddenly as in the days of Paul. A "snare" does not imply a personal realization that one is in a snare. The very term is a term with a measure of loving suggestiveness in it. Many are ensnared, they do not know it, they have been captured.

Q. They have not been taught?

A. Satan has taken advantage of that.

Q. Aquila and Priscilla instructed Apollos more perfectly.

A. Yes, I quite agree with you in that. If any do not oppose themselves

you can by the grace of God realize that they are not those who step forth from a Scriptural position into a sectarian position, but there must still be a desire that they might be brought out of the snare of the Devil, and they must be brought out of it before they can be brought to a Scriptural position. They are in the same snare though not with the same attitude.

Q. Do you not think that sometimes when God draws one to Himself He teaches that one that he is not in a right position?

A. I believe that the Lord does graciously work, and draw many to Himself. The Holy Spirit works amid all failure.

Q. It seems to lay a responsibility upon us to seek out newly converted ones.

A. Yes.

Q. "Attitude, not knowledge". How would you describe attitude?

A. Attitude is a condition of heart expressed by a whole demeanour, behaviour and life. A young believer needs instruction, but we need to be very careful that we put the instruction the right way lest it be discipleship TO US, because we are covering up the Lord's words by a mannerism of our own.

Q. I do not quite follow.

A. He may be disciple-like in greater measure before the Lord than he is before us, because of some fault in our manner.

Q. That would show that we are not in a fit position to deal with this.

A. And yet if we are going to wait till we are in a fit position, in the fulness of perfection, we shall do nothing. I quite agree that everything should make us search our hearts, and humble us before the Lord. We are never absolutely fit for anything.

Q. Take the case of one who has seen baptism and been baptized, but from our standpoint it does not seem to have been the will of the Lord for that one to have been baptized where he was baptized.

A. It is a very important thing that we should simply pray that the Lord who overrules even the government of the world would overrule these things. We rejoice even where Christ is preached of strife and contention. We rejoice when some are baptized, even in sects and systems. Some are in measure brought to the Lord if only part of the way, but we do long for them to be brought the whole way, and I think that one of the greatest needs is that we as children of God should pray for them to be brought in. Sometimes our words and our efforts will only be hindrances. Our prayers may

be more useful than our actions. I should like to see the Lord graciously bringing in any to the meetings, and unexpectedly. I think that is more encouraging than almost anything. If only we had more power in prayer in the Spirit, we might expect and receive.

Just a word as to FELLOWSHIP IN MINISTRY. Of course ministry is a very wide term. We can well understand that fellowship in ministry is within the circle of fellowship as to church assembly.

And then as to MINISTRY IN SPEAKING, for example, it naturally is linked with the fact that God has put a gift. It is not that any man has a right to do anything in an assembly, but simply that God has a right to use whom He will. Romans 10:15, illustrates.

As to the exclusion of fellowship in ministry with those who are outside the truth and are away from the assembly 3 John is perfectly clear.

As to personal fellowship in ministry where there is Scriptural harmony, - "Receive him. He worketh the work of the Lord as I do". Receive him as one in ministry. It is plainly a thought concerning ministry, and close agreement.

As to FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER. This, which is most important is set forth by Matthew 18 "Where two or three are gathered together ~~and~~ into My Name...if two of you shall agree". These words are striking. They do not refer to an assembly primarily, for "two or three" are smaller than an assembly. They do suggest that there must be certain agreement before there can be fellowship in prayer. I suppose we could have fellowship in some prayers with some of the Lord's people that we could not have fellowship with in their very words at other times. These things are all very saddening. One longs to have fulness of fellowship in prayer with all the Lord's redeemed who are in measure impressed with His truth.

Q. What prevents fellowship?

A. Whatever causes us to deplore that there is not agreement. "If two or you shall agree". "They continued with one accord". The Holy Spirit

leads believers to Christ and thus to one another, may we not expect this? A word as to the SPIRIT OF FELLOWSHIP. We find in Phil. 2, "If there be ...any fellowship of spirit" says the apostle. In Acts 2 we see it. And Acts 4 as well, where they were all together and had all things common, the word implies FELLOWSHIP. They were OF ONE HEART AND ONE SOUL, not merely an outward expression but there was a spiritual enjoyment and realization, whereby God was glorified. Oh that we might not have the skeleton of a church but that we might have as well as the framework, THE VITAL POWER BY THE GRACIOUS WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

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