

# First Principles In Closing Days

Regarding Reception and Service

As found in the writings of  
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## PREFACE

The quotations in this booklet are being sent forth with a view to helping the Lord's people, especially those who are young in the faith.

A few *brief* extracts have already appeared in "A Grave Danger." It has now been sought, in every case, to give the whole of the passage relevant to the subject in hand. Also the reference to the source is given in detail and the date where known.

It is earnestly desired that these extracts, believed to accord with Holy Scripture, may be used to recall the saints of God to the early church principles.

John Weston.

April, 1949.

## FIRST PRINCIPLES IN CLOSING DAYS

### REGARDING RECEPTION

“But I must hasten on to other branches of our subject, and I would just state another simple principle connected with the Lord’s Supper, to which I desire to call the special attention of the Christian reader; it is this, the celebration of the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper should be the distinct expression of the unity of ALL believers, and not merely of the unity of a certain number gathered upon certain principles, which distinguish them from others. If there be any term of communion proposed, save the all-important one of faith in the atonement of Christ, and a walk consistent with that faith, the table ceases to be the Lord’s, and becomes the table of a sect, and possesses no claims whatever upon the hearts of the faithful.

Furthermore, if, by sitting at the table, I must identify myself with any one thing, whether it be principle or practice, not enjoined in Scripture as a term of communion, there also the table ceases to be the Lord’s, and becomes the table of a sect. It is not a question of whether there may be Christians there or not; it would be hard indeed to find a table amongst the reformed communities of which some Christians are not partakers. The apostle did not say ‘there must be heresies among you, that they which are *Christians* may be made manifest among you.’ No; but ‘that they which are *approved*.’ Nor did he say, ‘Let a man prove himself a Christian, and so let him eat.’ No; but ‘let a man approve himself,’ i.e. let him show himself to be one of those who are not only upright in their consciences as to their individual act in the matter, but who are also furthering the unity of the body of Christ. When men set up terms of communion of their own, there you find the principle of heresy; there, too, there must be schism. On the contrary, where a table is spread in such a manner, and upon such principles, as that a Christian, as such, can take his place at it, then it becomes schism not to be there, for, by being there, and by walking consistently with our position and profession there, we, so far as in us lies, promote the unity of the Church of God — that grand object for which the Holy Ghost was sent from heaven to earth.”

*“Thoughts on the Lord’s Supper,”*  
(Date unknown).

*by C.H.M., pages 18-19.*

“The unity of Christ’s body being the ground assumed, all Christians have, in principle, a *title* to be there, the Lord’s name being maintained as to doctrine and discipline. If you insist on a certain standard of intelligence beyond Christ, before receiving them, you prove that you are not intelligent, and you abandon your own (namely, God’s) principle.

At the same time, it is all well that young converts should wait; it would do them no harm. The great requisite for receiving, is satisfaction as to membership of the body of Christ . . . . The principle is ‘one body and one spirit;’ the resource, now that all is confusion and inconsistency, is Matthew xviii: 20.”  
(1864).

*Letters of J.N.D., Vol. I, page 449.*

“As regards the second question: the principle of meeting is the unity of the body, so that a person known as a Christian is free to come: only the person who introduces him should have the confidence of the assembly as to his competency to judge of the person he introduces. In London and elsewhere the name of the person introducing is given out; or if many know him, that is mentioned and they are responsible. Looseness is so prevalent now among the denominations that more care is needed; but I hold that every known Christian has the same title as myself; and membership of an assembly I totally reject. But I do not accept running out at a person’s fancy: they may have been sinning or walking disorderly; and a person breaking bread is thereby subject to the discipline of God’s house, if called for, just as if he had been constantly there. Nor do I accept any condition from them, as that they are free to go anywhere: the assembly is to follow God’s word, and can bind itself by no condition. Nor do I impose any; because as the assembly is bound by the word and can accept none, so is the person subject to the discipline of the assembly according to the word.

I have never changed my views at all. The practice is more difficult because of the growing looseness in doctrines and practice of all around. But if an assembly refused a person known to be a Christian and blameless, because he was not of the assembly, I should not go. I own no membership but of Christ. An assembly

composed as such of its members is at once a sect. But the person who brings another is responsible to the assembly, and should mention it; for it is the assembly which is finally responsible, though it may trust the person who introduces another in the particular case. If it were a young Christian, or one of little maturity and weak in the faith, I should like to know what sure ground there was before allowing him to break bread, on the same principle as in all other cases.”

*(Date unknown).*

*Letters of J.N.D., Vol. 111, pages 182-183.*

“The question is, as to reception of saints to partake of the table of the Lord with us, whether any can be admitted who are not formally and regularly amongst us. It is not whether we exclude persons unsound in faith or ungodly in practice: not whether we, deliberately walking with those who are unsound and ungodly, are not in the same guilt — not clear in the matter. The first is unquestionable; the last, brethren have insisted on, and I among them, at very painful cost to ourselves. This is, to me, all clear and plain from scripture. There may be subtle pleas to get evil allowed, but we have always been firm, and God I believe has fully owned it. The question is not these; but suppose a person known to be godly and sound in faith, who has not left some ecclesiastical system — nay, thinks scripture favours an ordained ministry, but is glad when the occasion occurs — suppose we alone are in the place, or he is not in connection with any other body in the place, staying with a brother, or the like; is he to be excluded because he is of some system as to which his conscience is not enlightened — nay, which he may think more right? He is a godly member of the body, known such. Is he to be shut out? If so, the degree of light is title to communion, and the unity of the body is denied by the assembly which refused him. The principle of meeting as members of Christ walking in godliness is given up, *agreement* with us is made the rule, and the assembly becomes a sect with its members like any other. They meet on their principles, Baptist or other — you on yours, and if they do not belong to you formally as such, you do not let them in. The principle of brethren’s meetings is gone, and another sect is made, say with more light and that is all. It may give more

trouble, require more care to treat every case on its merits, on the principle of the unity of all Christ’s members, than say ‘you do not belong to us, you cannot come.’ But the whole principle of meeting is gone. The path is not of God.

I have heard, and I partly believe it, for I have heard some rash and violent people say it elsewhere, that the various sectarian celebrations of the supper are tables of devils. But this proves only the unbrokenness and ignorance of him who says it. The heathen altars are called tables of devils because, and expressly because, what they offered they offered (according to Deut. xxxii: 17) to devils, and not to God; and to call Christian assemblies by profession, ignorant it may be of ecclesiastical truth, and hence meeting wrongly, tables of devils is monstrous nonsense, and shows the bad state of him who so talks. No sober man, no honest man, can deny that scripture means something totally different.

I have heard — I do not know whether it be true — that it has been said that the brethren in England met on this ground. If this has been said, it is simply and totally false. There have been new gatherings formed during my absence in America which I have never visited, but the older ones, long walking as brethren, I have known from the beginning have *always* received known Christians and everywhere I have no doubt the newer ones too, and so in every country. I have known individuals take up the thought, one at any rate at Toronto, but the assembly always received true Christians: three broke bread in this way the last Lord’s day I was in London. There cannot be too much care as to holiness and truth: the Spirit is the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of truth. But ignorance of ecclesiastical truth is not a ground of excommunication, where the conscience and the walk is undefiled. If a person came and made it a condition to be allowed to go to both, he would not come in simplicity in the unity of the body; I know it to be evil, and cannot *allow* it, and he has no right to impose any conditions on the church of God. It must exercise discipline as cases arise according to the Word. Nor indeed do I think a person regularly going from one to another systematically can be honest in going to either: he is setting up to be superior to both, and condescending to each. That is not, *in that* act, a pure heart.

May the Lord guide you. Remember, you are acting as representing the whole church of God, and if you depart from a

right path as to the principle of meeting, separating yourselves from it is to be a local sect on your own principles. In all that concerns faithfulness, God is my witness, I seek no looseness, but Satan is busy to lead us one side or the other, to destroy the largeness of the unity of the body, or to make it mere looseness in practice and doctrine; we must not fall into one in avoiding the other. Reception of all true saints is what gives its force to the exclusion of those walking loosely. If I exclude all who walk godlily as well, who do not follow with us, it loses its force, for those who are godly are shut out too — there is membership of brethren. Member-ship of an assembly is unknown to scripture. It is members of Christ's body. If people must be all of you, it is practically membership of your body. The Lord keep us from it. That is simply dissenting ground.”  
(1869).

*Letters of J.N.D., Vol. II, pages 11-14.*

“I feel daily more the importance of the Christians at P., and I do trust that you will keep infinitely far from sectarianism. The great body of the Christians who are accustomed to religion, are scarce capable of understanding anything else as the mind ever tends there. If they become so in their position before God, they would be utterly useless, and I am persuaded, immediately broken to pieces. You are nothing, nobody, but Christians, and the moment you cease to be an available mount for communion for any consistent Christian you will go to pieces or help the evil.”  
(1833).

*Letters of J.N.D., Vol. 1, page 21.*

“The question you put as to receiving is to me always a delicate one. The point is to conciliate sound discipline, and being wholly outside the camp, which is of increasing importance, and avoiding being a sect, which I should as anxiously do. Receiving all members of Christ's body is not a sect clearly, and that is the principle on which I unite, but *they* must walk orderly and be under discipline, and not pretend to impose conditions on the church of God. If therefore they came claiming as a condition

liberty to go elsewhere, I could not allow it, because I know it is wrong, and the church of God cannot allow what is wrong. If it was ignorance, and they came *bond fide* in the spirit of unity to that which is the symbol of unity, I should not reject them, because they had not in fact broken [with it], but I could not accept what made us part of the camp, nor any sort of claim to go to both, to be inside and outside. This is equally pretentious and dishonest . . . . . But I receive a person who comes in simplicity with a good conscience, for the sake of spiritual communion, though they may not yet see clearly ecclesiastically; but the assembly is bound to exercise discipline as to them, and know their walk and purity of heart in coming whenever they do. They cannot come in and out just as they please, because the conscience of the assembly is engaged in the matter, and its duty to God, and to Him at whose table they are. Looseness in this is more fatal than ever now. If a person practically says I will come to take a place in the body of Christ when I like, and go into sects and evil when I like for convenience or pleasure, that is not a pure heart. It is making their own will the rule of God's assembly, and subjecting the assembly to it and that cannot be — is clearly wrong. May the Lord's grace and gracious keeping be with you all.”  
(1873).

*Letters of J.N.D., Vol. II, pages 250-251.*

“There is still one thing, dear brother, that has come upon my spirit. I suppose that you have continued relations with the established church; perhaps I am mistaken, but I discern the possibility that these relations may be enfeebled if you follow the call to evangelisation which you think you have received from God. If this come to pass, I hope with all my heart, that you will not throw yourself, on the other hand, into narrowness; it is this which has been one of the sores of Swiss Christians. I have nothing to hide from you in my christian ways (*habitudes*). It is my joy and privilege to find myself in the midst of brethren who know one another in Christ, and to rejoice in the blessedness of brotherly communion in all the weakness in which it may be found at present; but I could not recognise an assembly that does not receive all the children of God, because I know that Christ receives

them. I see the church in ruins: I follow my conscience according to the light that I have received from the word, but I desire to bear with the weakness or lack of light that I may find in other Christians, and do all that I can to unite those who love the Lord. The liberty of your ministry, if God bless it, may be a means to this desirable result; and I, according to the light that I have received, find it impossible to remain in nationalism, but I would rather remain alone and isolated, a position, I admit, not at all desirable, than to restrict the limits of the church of Christ to some brethren, even though they may be more correct in their thoughts than others, and to enfeeble the action of the Spirit of God in uniting the Lord's sheep, scattered by our wretchedness and by our sins."

(1840).

*Letters of J.N.D., Vol. 1, page 42.*

"As to the danger of slipping into sectarianism, that is, making ourselves a body apart. I recognise it fully; but it has through mercy received a rude shock. The printed list of meetings tended to it, for evil slips in unintentionally, and for this reason I never would have anything to say to it, though very convenient, and done with this view. M.'s Book, ('The Brethren: their Origin. etc.') which I never heard of till three days ago, strange to say, had from what I hear of it (I have never seen it) had the same tendency; but human nature is always disposed to say 'we' if it cannot say 'I': 'He followeth not with us'; while in separation from the camp, I am as decided as possible. But I never in my life asked any one to come among brethren.

But the principle of scripture is as plain as possible. There was one body on *earth*, of which all are members. They do not heal in heaven, nor preach. nor use any of the gifts spoken of in 1 Corinthians xii. 'If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it:' that is not in heaven. The body will be perfected in heaven (Eph. i: 23), but is practically always considered as on earth, and formed there: 'by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body.' And this was clearly down here (Acts ii). The Lord's supper is the external sign of this unity: 'one body for we are all partakers of that one loaf.' It was this, more than fifty years ago,

brought me out of the establishment: nor have I any other principle now. This obliged me to own every one baptised with the Holy Ghost as a member of the body. Only in the last days we are called on to distinguish those who 'call on the name of the Lord *out of a pure heart*,' which at the first was not called for: '*the Lord* added daily.' This makes the brethren (so-called) not the Church of God, but those who alone meet on the principle of its unity. The line between narrowness and fidelity is a very narrow one. But the Spirit of Christ can guide and keep us on it. The unity of the body cannot be touched, for the Holy Ghost unites to Christ: all those who have been baptised by the Holy Ghost (that is, received Him), are members of the body. It is 'the unity of the Spirit' we have to keep; that is, to walk in that power of the Spirit which keeps us in unity on the earth, and that needs endeavouring. I dread a gathering in any place being called the church of God. They are the only assembly that meets on scriptural principles: did I not think so I should not go there, but it tends to narrow and sectarianise them.

All this seems to me very simple, but it is not so easy to keep the spirits of all here to it, both in fidelity and love, for we are poor creatures. I know those who tend too much to looseness, others too much to narrowness. The Spirit of God alone can lead us in both, and that requires us to walk near Christ. But as to principles I have no difficulty; but without holiness and Christ being all, being emptied of self, we shall not practically succeed. God is light and love, but He alone can unite both and thus give a true and right unity."

(1879).

*Letters of J.N.D., Vol. Ill, pages 62-63.*

"God calls on us to be diligent in maintaining 'the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.' It is not the unity of our spirits, but the unity of *the* Spirit.

When we reflect that it is the Holy Ghost who forms this unity, is it not a solemn thought? Ought we not to guard against anything that would grieve Him? Our Lord attached special importance to what touched the Holy Ghost; and so should we, if wise. If the Holy Ghost is here for this purpose on earth, He becomes a divine test for souls, whether they are prepared to honour Him or not. But people might say, if you receive all

Christians without requiring them to give a pledge for the future, tacitly, if not expressly, you may accept a Socinian or an Arian. But I do not acknowledge such to be Christians at all: do you? What is the Church founded on? ‘Whom say ye that I am?’ says our Lord in the very chapter in which He first notices that He was going to build the Church. ‘Thou art the Christ,’ said a disciple, ‘the Son of the living God.’ And what does our Lord reply? ‘Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.’ Hence there ought to be the strongest, strictest dealing with souls, whether in deed and in truth they believe and confess the divine glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. The smallest compromise as to this allowed would be a reason for standing in doubt of any soul. You have no ground to receive, as a Christian him who tampers with the purity, glory, or integrity of the person of Christ. The Church is founded on Christ the Son of God: if this rock be shaken, all is gone. ‘If the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do?’ To touch Christ is to touch the very basis on which the Church of God rests.

But where a soul confesses Christ really and truly, confesses Him in such a way that it commends itself to your conscience as divine, receive him; for God has. He may be Baptist or Paedo-Baptist: never mind, receive him. If he is living in sin, need I say that Christ and drunkenness, etc., cannot go together? Faith in the Son of God is incompatible with walking in darkness.”

*Lectures on Ephesians by W.K., pages 152-153.*

“But further, this unity is to be kept in the bond of peace. God is forming His Church of all those who belong to Himself. It is not Christian persons holding particular views of this or that; but the Spirit holding to His own unity, or to what Christ is to them, not to the points in which they differ one from another. If I want to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. I must have my own soul settled upon this: the Holy Ghost is glorifying Christ alone. You cannot please the Father more than in exalting the Son; and you cannot touch Him more nearly than by slighting His Son. All is secured in maintaining Christ. This brings it to the simplest possible issue. What have we to do with forcing people to give up their views and adopt ours, let them be ever so correct? God’s word furnishes a ground, in the name of

Christ, on which you can embrace all saints, let them be ever so weak or prejudiced. Let us beware of being more careful of our own reputation or ease than of His Will. Let us not be vain of our little knowledge, or of the point we have attained to in practice. Let us look up to the Lord for faith and patience to own every real member and servant of Christ, wherever found. Let us cleave to the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and be diligent in maintaining it, whatever the difficulties may be, and surely they are great. Faith does not see many bodies and one Spirit — it knows but one body. Bearing with others who in this see dimly or double, let us be rigid in holding fast the name of Christ, and for ourselves be careful to accredit nothing contrary to it.”

*Lectures on Ephesians by W.K., pages 154-155.*

“I should receive a Baptist or an Independent cordially as a Christian, but I could not give any other testimony than what I believe to be the truth.”

(1862).

*Letters of J.N.D., Vol. I, page 400.*

“As regards your last 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 persons break 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 so 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 conscience of the assembly. At the beginning it was not so, that is, there was no such examination. Now I believe it a duty according to 2 Timothy ii. Nobody comes in but as a believer. This again makes the distinction of member of the particular assembly.

Still, I do not think a practice such as this sister’s is satisfactory. I admit fully every case must stand on its own merits, and so be dealt with. Where breaking bread is intermitted, it is all

well to mention it, though this be in some cases uncalled for, where the assembly knows about it and is satisfied. But if persons break bread, they are as subject to discipline as if always there, because it is the church of God which is in question, though represented by two or three: Christ is there. If it is merely an occasional coming as a stranger, and the person not known, it is well to mention. What is not satisfactory in such cases is: first, it is accepting the person by the assembly as if he had another fellowship beside membership of Christ, which I do not recognise at all. And, secondly, I should fear there was a reluctance to take honestly the reproach of the position, the true separated position of saints, and [the wish] to be able to say to others, I do not belong to them, I only go as a believer: I only go as a believer, only I accept the position. Waiting for them to get clear is all well.

A true believer has *title* at the Table; but if they meet as members of Christ's body, they are all one body, as partakers of one loaf. I do not admit them. I own their title, wait upon their want of light, but would not allow them to put me in the position of a sect (and, 'full fellowship,' means that), making allowance for their ignorance and waiting upon it. They do not come really to break bread with us on the ground of the unity of the body, if they think they are not one with us in coming; for if we are true and right, they are not one with the body of Christ, the only principle of meeting I know at all. I repeat, in the present state of the church we must have 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 some-times 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.”

(1875).

*Letters of J.N.D., Vol. II pages 416-417.*

“There is no difference between [breaking bread as] a Christian and fellowship, though some may not be always there; because the only fellowship or membership is of the body of Christ, and if a person breaks bread and is thus recognised as a member of the body of Christ, he is subject to all the discipline of the house. I may not enforce constant attendance with us only, because he may come with the desire to show unity of spirit, and yet think that *his* ways are more orderly conscientiously. If his heart be pure (2 Tim. ii.), I have no reason to exclude him; but if anything in his path require he should be excluded, he is liable to it like any one else. But I know no fellowship other than of membership of the body of Christ. Being met, the question is, has he done anything which involves disciplinary exclusion.

Only I believe brethren alone walk in consistency with the fellowship of saints in the unity of the body: but I know no particular corporation as that body — not even brethren — nay, these least of all. This would deny themselves. Though they have this, that they meet on the principles of that unity, but for that reason, must own all its members, on the one hand, and maintain its discipline on the other.”

(1870).

*Letters of J.N.D., Vol. II, pages 129-130.*

“But *who* has said that saints ‘should separate themselves from the professing Church?’ We have *not* left the professing Church at all. We found some things we used to do were evil, and we ceased to do them; we learnt there were other things it was well to do, and these we are now learning to do. Are we mistaken in either? Is it possible you are tinder the impression

that to separate from the Establishment or from Dissent, is to separate from the professing Church? To meet as ‘Brethren’ do, in the Lord’s name, is not in the least degree to separate from that Church. but to do what every disciple ought to do in it. Nobody does or can separate from the professing Church, except an open apostate.

I am sorry you find no guidance in this matter from the first two passages, for they are both full of light: that from the Old Testament, as a general principle of conduct for the individual: that from the New Testament, as expressly directing the Christian in a day of disorder such as ours. It is ridiculous to say that if a man really acts as Isaiah i, 16, 17 directs, he can fall from one evil into *a greater*. For the word is, ‘cease to do evil’ — not some one, but all evil. As long as that divine oracle is heard, evil, greater or less, is avoided. And what is this ‘greater evil?’ ‘Refusing communion with those whom Jesus loves,’ &c. But there, again, are you not at fault? We receive *every* Christian walking as such, without reference to their connexion with Nationalism or Dissent; we rejoice to have communion with them, whether privately or publicly. They may join us in the worship and the supper of the Lord; they are as free as any of us to help in thanksgiving, prayer, or a word of edification, if so led of God; and this, without stipulation either to leave their old associations or to meet only with us. Where is this done save only among ‘Brethren?’ Were any of us, no matter how gifted of the Lord, to give out a hymn, to pray, or minister at St. John’s Church when you take the sacrament, the Canons (*not* Scripture) would treat it as indecent and disorderly; and so would it be. as far as I am aware, in any of the Dissenting sects, except by special courtesy. With us, on the contrary, if any godly Churchman or Dissenter thought fit to come when we remember the Lord together, he would be quite in order, if he did any or all of these things spiritually; and this, not from any mere permission on our part. but as a matter of responsibility to God and His Word. Which, then, is guilty of ‘the evil of refusing communion with those whom Jesus loves?’ Certainly not we. If you mean that I, for

one, would refuse (not to have communion with God’s children anywhere in a holy scriptural way, but) to join in the services of the Establishment, that is a very different question, and not a sin, in my judgment, but a duty to God, as I have already proved even on your own principles.”

*“God’s principle of unity,” by W.K., pages 23-24.*

“For it is no question of receiving Christians in Christ’s name, graciously dealing with ecclesiastical ignorance. This we have always held (save a few who played an unhappy part in the late disasters) to be thoroughly of God; and I trust we shall ever so continue, believing and acting on it as due to Christ. With O.B. it is a wholly different case from welcoming a godly person, in spite of his sect. For *they* were once with us on common ground of Scripture; they owned the ‘one body and one Spirit,’ as gathered to Christ’s name. Their origin, the reason of their existence, was to defend and maintain the reception of men tainted with the worst sin — indifference to the truth of Christ. That they may have liked independency before, that they walk in it and enforce it since, is true enough; but he that puts forward independency of principle, as the plague-spot of the O.B., is blind to their characteristic and most serious evil. And if he goes so far as to reject individuals for independency, to be consistent, he must abandon all the largeness of heart which marked Brethren from the first, and the principle which their best and wisest leaders cherished to the last — our title of grace to welcome godly saints out of any orthodox denomination though independency is stamped in various forms on all. No denomination as such, great or small, does or can stand on the ‘one body and one Spirit’ of Scripture for principle and practice alike. This demands living faith ecclesiastically, and an entire superiority to the world and flesh, which must have independency open or latent but real.

We have ever allowed that in the ranks of Open Brethrenism there might be individuals wholly and honestly ignorant that it is founded as a society on indifference to a true or a false Christ. Where this is certain, one would seek to deal pitifully with them, and no one was freer to receive such with a grave caution than the late J.N.D., as almost all others of weight have done. Timid men, ever prone to sectarian barriers. have alas! refused even such.

But no upright neutral brother would seek, wish, or submit to, such terms; only those who have neither faith nor principle, who are ready to break bread at Bethesda *and* at Park Street, *and* with us too who refuse both systems, if they were allowed.”

(1890).

*“The Doctrine of Christ and Bethesdaism,” (new edition) by W.K., pages 16-18.*

“I have no wish to keep the Bethesda question, not that I judge the evil as less than I thought it, but that from the length of time many there are mere dissenters, and know nothing of the doctrine; so that they are really in conscience innocent, though gone in there as they would into any dissenting place. If this brother had never had anything to do with B. as such, I should have asked him nothing about it, as happens every day. But your account is that his separation was on account of looseness in discipline. What I think I should do would be not to discuss B. but to show him, say J.E.B.’s confession, where he states what they taught, and ask him simply if he held any of these, as they were the things that had made the difficulty. I should not ask anything about B. If he does not hold them I should not make any difficulty. I should gladly have patience with a godly brother who had seriously a difficulty. If it were merely wilful I do not feel that an assembly is bound to satisfy his wilfulness. This principle is recognised in 1 Corinthians distinctly. Otherwise one perverse person might keep evil in the assembly perpetually.

He would allege his conscience being governed by the word of God, and not yours.”

(1878).

*Letters of J.N.D., Vol. III., page 447.*

## REGARDING SERVICE.

“But my business is with the work of the evangelist; and I maintain that he is to carry on his work entirely outside of the assembly. His sphere of action is the wide wide world. ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.’ Here is the sphere and here the object of the evangelist — ‘All the world’ — ‘Every creature.’ He may go forth from the bosom of the assembly, and return thither again laden with his golden sheaves; nevertheless he goes forth in the energy of personal faith in the living God, and on the ground of personal responsibility to Christ; nor is the assembly identified with, or responsible for, the peculiar *mode* in which he may carry on his work. No doubt the assembly is called into action when the evangelist introduces the *fruit* of his work in the shape of souls professing to be converted, and desiring to be received into fellowship at the Lord’s table. But this is another thing altogether, and must be kept distinct. The evangelist must be left free: this is what I contend for. He must not be tied down to certain rules or regulations, nor cramped by special conventionalities. There are many things which a large-hearted evangelist will feel perfectly free to do which might not commend themselves to the spiritual judgment and feelings of some in the assembly; but, provided he does not traverse any vital or fundamental principle, such persons have no right to interfere with him.

And be it remembered, dearest A., that when I use the expression, ‘spiritual judgment and feelings,’ I am taking the very highest possible view of the case, and treating the objector with the highest respect. I feel this is but right and proper. Every true man has a right to have his feelings and judgment — not to speak of conscience — treated with all due respect. There are, alas! everywhere, men of narrow mind, who object to everything that does not square with their own notions — men who would fain tie the evangelist down to the exact line of things and mode of acting which according to their thinking would suit the assembly of God’s people when gathered for worship at the table of the Lord.

All this is a thorough mistake. The evangelist must not listen to it or be influenced by it. He should pursue the even tenor of his way, regardless of all such narrowness and meddling. He may feel perfectly free to adopt a style of speaking and a mode

of working which would be entirely out of place in the assembly. Take, for example, the matter of singing hymns. The evangelist may feel perfectly free to use a class of hymns or gospel songs which would be wholly unsuitable for the assembly. The fact is, he *sings* the gospel for the same object that he *preaches* it, namely, to reach the sinner's heart. He is just as ready to sing 'Come' as to preach it."

*"Papers on Evangelisation," by C.H.M., pages 64-65.*

"At first such of the Christians as had been Jews went to the synagogue, and they were at liberty to take a part in reading Scripture. If this were done now, generally, the person would be considered an intruder, but in a Jewish synagogue it was allowed and welcomed.

The apostles, therefore, and others, were perfectly justified in using this liberty for the truth; they were acting in the spirit of grace. Wherever we can go with a good conscience, and without joining in anything that is contrary to the word of God, there one may and ought to go, if it would be a service to the Lord. But where one is required to join in that or with those we know to be opposed to the will of God, how are we free to go? Are we at liberty in anything to make light of what we know to be disobedience? But in this case there was nothing of the kind; for at the synagogue they simply read the word of God and gave leave that it should be expounded. Who could say that this was wrong? If we knew that the Scripture and nothing but the Scripture was read upon any day of the week in a so-called church or chapel, and there were perfect room left to help, should one not be delighted to go, if indeed there would not be a kind of obligation upon us? If it were a mere crowd of heathen reading the Scriptures, one might enter it, and speak with them. The door would be, I believe, open on the Lord's part, and grace would take advantage of it."

(1865-6).

*Exposition of Mark. by W.K., page 50.*

"As to there being positive gifts for ministry in the church now, no doubt there are pastors, teachers, evangelists, as distinctly

as possible. One great cause of the confusion and disorder, in which the church is now, is the want of wisdom in recognising these gifts; so that we often find evangelists teaching old saints, and pastors going out to preach to sinners. This shows the confusion which man has produced by his own arrangements.

I could not exactly say that gifts necessarily accompany the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. It is not merely that God has set in the body all these things. If I were asked in what state God made man, I should say, 'upright'; but this would not be true of him now. Has every man necessarily a gift now? No; there are many services now that cannot be called gifts: the giving a cup of cold water in the name of Christ is a service to Christ and to a saint, but it is not the exercise of a gift, though of more importance than a gift because it is the proof of love. Whilst the gift is God's and supreme, yet He forms the vessel, and suits it for the distinct gift which He gives to it.

Paul was a highly educated man; Peter was a poor fisherman. God glorified Himself in them both. He chooses the vessel as well as gives the gift. God will be supreme — He uses what vessel He pleases. Paul never went to the feet of Gamaliel for wisdom after he was a saint; he was a prepared vessel in providence, filled in grace.

How may any gift be ascertained, etc.? There is not a more important principle than that every gift ascertains itself in its exercise, as says the apostle Paul, 'the seal of my apostleship are ye in the Lord.' In the exercise of any gift, nothing can remove us from individual responsibility to the Lord. The Lord gave the gift, and the Lord requires the service. Do not mind the whole church (they are but 'chaff') when they interfere with our responsibility to the Lord. Exercise the gift in subjection to God's word, and those who will judge, let them judge. I could not give up my personal responsibility to Christ (miserably as I may fail in it) for all the church ten times told over. The mark of the wicked and unfaithful servant was, that he was waiting for some other warrant than grace to use the talent which had been committed to him."

(Date unknown).

*J.N.D. Collected Writings, Vol. xxxi., pages 458-460.*

“If Christ has thought proper to give me a gift, I am to trade with my talent as His servant, and the assembly has nothing to do with it: I am not their servant at all. If they wish me to teach them I will teach, but I do not go as into an assembly, but to teach those who are disposed to hear. I exercise my individual gift, the assembly has nothing to do with me. I refuse peremptorily to be its servant. If I do or say anything as an individual, calling for discipline, that is another matter; but in trading with my talent, I act neither in nor for an assembly, *rejoiced* to do it in fellowship with them. If —’s doctrine was right, an evangelist could never exercise his gift at all, for he cannot really in an assembly as such. A teacher is just as much a servant of Christ as the evangelist, and bound to wait on his teaching. I believe it an effort of the enemy to deny ministry as service to the Lord.

In an assembly I may teach, but I do not go as a teacher: I may not open my mouth, or merely pray, I am merely one of the assembly. When I go to teach, I go individually to exercise my gift, and not into an assembly at all; and if this be denied, the authority of Christ and the liberty of the Spirit [are denied] to substitute for them the authority of the assembly. Difficulty was made here at one of the meetings, and I am going *this day* to lecture, the assembly having rejected the idea; and the brother who had the difficulty was silenced by their asking him did he not go and hold meetings in the country — which he did. Why should you object, they said, here? The Lordship of Christ is denied by those who hold these ideas; they want to make the assembly or themselves lords. If I am Christ’s servant, let me serve Him in the liberty of the Spirit. They want to make the servants of Christ the servants of the assembly, and deny individual service as responsible to Christ. I do not go into the assembly when I go to teach or to evangelise, nor am I aware that Lord of the assembly is a scriptural idea at all; if it be it can be shown me, I do not recollect it; but my liberty in the Spirit and my responsibility to Christ I will not surrender to anyone, or any assembly. But you have complicated it with the room. It is far better — should give up the control of the room if the assembly *pays* for it. If the assembly as such wish for a teacher to lecture, — has no right to

hinder them; who is he to control the whole assembly in it? But let the assembly do it, if the assembly pay for the room.

There is full liberty. Paul takes Timothy; Apollos will not go where Paul wishes, and Barnabas gets Paul to come; and if they were teaching and preaching, why should not those gifted now? And if Paul and Barnabas were guided of the Spirit, why may not, in their measure, teachers be guided now? Who sent Titus to Crete, or left Timothy in Ephesus? They will say it was apostolic authority. *Be it so*; but do not let them pretend it is contrary to the liberty of the Spirit in those who serve. Paul went into the synagogue *as his manner was*; it was an arrangement. He separated the disciples, and discoursed daily in the school of one Tyrannus. This was arranged, and a lecture. Did this destroy the liberty of the Spirit? I am perfectly clear that all this is an attempt of the enemy to destroy the liberty of the Spirit, and the authority of Christ over His servants, and introduce another authority into the church of God I am free to act without consulting them in my service to Christ: they are not the masters of the Lord’s servants.”

(1870).

*Letters of J.N.D., Vol. 11, pages 109-110.*

“There is nothing practically more important than that each servant of God should know the work He has given him to do; and that when known he should stick to it. Be assured also that it is of no small importance never to interfere with another’s service. The Lord is sovereign in this. He divides according to His own will. This on the one hand we are bound to respect; while on the other there is nothing more lovely than mutual subjection according to the grace and in the fear of God. This very principle ought to make us jealous of trenching on that which we ourselves could not properly enter into. I hold it to be a certain truth, that every saint of God has a work to do entrusted by the Lord, which nobody else can do so well.”

(1870).

*Lectures On the Pentateuch, by W.K., page 313.*

“In connection with what you tell me about evangelisation, be it of the appeal to souls. I am as far as possible from thinking it a low thing. A faithful brother who had at heart the walk of the brethren, reproached me for devoting myself too much to it, more than twenty years ago. I have no regret, far from it; I feel that other brothers have a greater gift for it; but it is a joy to me, when God gives me the grace of being occupied with that part of the work. In these last times this work is of the greatest importance. Also, God has led many people into it. With some there is what is superficial, so that a work which acts more deeply in consciences becomes also necessary; but, here at least, it is as if God would urge souls into a place of safety before the end. Thank God, there is more zeal among brethren on that side also; but I believe that, in all times, blessing within is in the measure of the spirit of evangelisation. The reason is very simple. It is the presence of God which blesses, and God is love, and it is love which makes one seek souls. It is not at all to despise or neglect the care of souls that are christian. Nothing is more important in its place, but it seems to me that the two things go together where the love of God is found. Nor is it any more to neglect what are called the principles of brethren, principles to which I always attach the greatest importance, as the testimony of God in these last days. It is the word which made me receive them as the truth at the beginning; experience has made me feel the importance of them for the whole church, and that in the sight of the Lord and as the testimony of God, essential for these times. But God loves souls, and if we do not seek them He will set His testimony elsewhere. He loves us, I believe; but He has no need of us. May He give us only to be faithful to Him, and He will certainly bless us. His patience also is great.”

(1862).

*Letters of J.N.D.*, Vol. 1, pages 392.393.

“Remember your leaders who have spoken to you the word of God; and considering the issue of their conversation, imitate their faith.”

*Hebrews xiii, 7 (N.Tr.).*

“Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet.”

*Jeremiah vi. 16, 17*