



**A CIRCLE
OF
FELLOWSHIP**

Reprints of some papers appearing in
“THINGS NEW AND OLD”

Foreword

The principle of the 'open' communion and the independency of one gathering from every other, is contrary to the One Lordship of Christ, and to the truth that He is Head, and to the fact that there is one Spirit. It is also contrary to the consideration that the instructions given in the Word of God to *one* gathering are in view of, and for the guidance of, *all* gatherings in Christian fellowship (1 Cor. 1:2; 4:17; 7:17; 14:33-34; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). It is inconsistent with the partnership or fellowship to which all Christians in every place are called (1 Cor. 1:9), and with the truth that there is one body, energized by one Christ.

W.H.W.

From "Present Questions" by Hamilton Smith

REMEMBER YOUR LEADERS

(Hebrews 13:7, J. N. D.)

With each generation there arises need for the fresh presentation of certain truths relative to the fellowship God has called us to. Due, perhaps, to neglect, or familiarity without exercise, or many other reasons, there is, however, back of it all Satan's unrelenting effort to rob Christ of His glory in regards to His testimony in His Body here on earth. Though we are in the last days, yet the precious truth of the One Body, as set forth in Scripture, is not only to be theoretically held, but practically maintained today as ever before. This involves the authoritative teaching of Scripture as to principles concerning the unity of the assemblies of God's people. These principles have been unfolded for us by "Leaders" amongst God's people since the recovery of this precious truth nearly a century and a half ago. They spoke of this unity of the Spirit as seen in "a circle of fellowship," and clearly spoke and wrote of the necessity of the maintenance of this principle for Godly order and discipline to be carried out in the House of God.

In Hebrews 13:7, the Spirit of God through Paul, exhorts us to, "**Remember your leaders who have spoken unto you the Word**

of God: and considering the issue of their conversation, Imitate their faith" (J. N. D. Trans.).

From the writings of some of these "Leaders," excerpts have been taken, pertinent to the principle of "a circle of fellowship," and presented herein for fresh exercise amongst the assemblies of God's people at this time. Notations of the source of these excerpts are made so the reader may obtain the entire papers, where possible, to note the consistency of context.

MR. A. E. BOOTH

"No matter how many Assemblies may be scattered, it is **dis-**
tance only that separates them. Their relationship by the Spirit is one. Nothing can be nearer or closer. Then, to be consistent with that **God ordained** and **estab-**
lished relationship, their **practice**, their **fellowship**, their **order**, their **government**, of **necessity should be one**. In all this where does **in-**
dependency come in, when saints are gathered consistent with the Pauline teachings? Independency, in contrast with the **God appoint-**
ed unity of saints and ASSEMBLIES, is discovered in its beginning when Paul wrote his last epistle to Timothy, "All they which

are in Asia be turned away from me” 12 Tim. 1:15). So, step by step, stage by stage, the departure has continued ever since . . . **Let us one and all be warned.**” (*Present Day Mistakes*, 1932).

MR. SAMUEL RIDOUT

“The characteristic feature of Independency is, as its name indicates, that the local gathering is a unit, whose association with other gatherings is very light. Growing out of this is a denial of a ‘Circle of fellowship’—various assemblies recognizing one another as holding the same truth and having the same order. They claim that all fellowship is of **individuals** with Christ; that this **individual** fellowship with Him is also the fellowship of His Church, the only real link and title to be recognized. In this sense there is no real local assembly, but only the general fellowship of the whole body. They point to the fact there is ‘one body,’ and that there can be no **circle of fellowship** which is **narrower** than the limits of the Church of God. But if each local assembly is **independent** of all others, if its **discipline** is only for itself, is there not at once ignoring of the very **unity** which is being contended for?” (*The Church*.)

MR. B. C. GREENMAN

“There is, at present, in quarters where one regrets to find it, much ‘cheap talk’ about fellowship with ALL CHRISTIANS, which a little scrutiny shows means simply nothing **but talk**. A silly hue and cry is raised against ‘a circle of fellowship,’ as being sectarian and not of God; but perforce there can be NO fellowship without it being a circle, or having its limits, whether they be true or false. Yet we also belong to a circle of fellowship, and in spite of ourselves, if we have fellowship with others at all; few or many, right or wrong. . . . But in the mere fact that we receive **some** individuals, and refuse **others**, and that we are in **fellowship** with **some** gatherings, and not in fellowship with **others**, is no **sectarianism whatever**, else the truth of God as a **Scriptural fellowship, has died out of the world**. This we do not believe, and on the one hand, trust to find until the Lord comes, not only **individuals** but **companies**, who seek to maintain the holiness and grace alike that **become God’s house**. The Apostle Paul teaches a ‘CIRCLE OF FELLOWSHIP’ in 1 Cor. 7:17, 11:16, 12:26, 14:33, and were he here with us, we believe, would help us to **sacredly** regard the Scriptural lines he then laid down as the minister of the Church, amid the evils of our own day. He would

NOT be in fellowship with ALL CHRISTIANS, we know, from his attitude towards the brother put away at Corinth, and the Assembly that for the time being was defiled by his presence. And finally this 'communion of saints' means the maintenance of godly order, **both in and between the Assemblies**, so that no one can be owned as **independent** of the others. This we believe, the very nature of the one body, and owning its living Head, forbids." (*Unity versus Independency*.)

MR. C. CRAIN

"Of course, in strictly local affairs, each meeting attends to its own matter; but in matters which concern the whole Church, or in which the Church as a whole is involved, the relation of assemblies to each other **must** be thought of. Any action in a given locality which **violates this relationship** would be **independency**, and inconsistent with the **truth of the Church**. Local responsibility as opposed to **unity** is a **false** principle and an evil one. It is thus a distinct assault on the Church, and must be looked at as such by all who wish to preserve the truth. To **protest against** and **refuse these principles** is as much a duty as it is to **refuse the teaching of Mr. Newton**." (*Unity vs. Independency*, 1932.)

MR. C. H. MACKINTOSH

"Hence, therefore, my beloved and valued friend, we can see that 'exclusivism,' so far from being a dreaded bugbear, is the **bounden** duty of every assembly gathered on the ground of the Church of God; and those who **deny it** prove themselves to be simply ignorant of the true character of the house of God, and of the immensely important **distinction** between the **discipline of the house** and the **unity of the body**." (Fifteenth Letter to a Friend.)

MR. J. N. DARBY

"As to 'ad infinitum' it is a mere bugbear, whatever **associates itself with evil** be it three or three hundred or three million, is on the **same ground**. If I associate myself with a **principle of action**, what matters how many **assemblies** engage in it, if they be so? Beside, it is a denial of the body. I know of so many **assemblies**: discipline in **one** is discipline in **all**, and the **denial** of this shows plainly enough where you have **all got**." (Letters, Vol. 2, Page 268. 1873.) "In these days the **unity of the body** and separation from evil are vital points of testimony for Christians. One is the original and abiding principle of the church's existence the other faithfulness to its nature and characterizing that faithfulness in a special manner in the last days.

To me it is that (both) or nothing."
(Vol. 1, page 618. 1867.)

MR. F.W. GRANT

"These brethren now take the ground distinctly of refusing a 'circle of fellowship' altogether apart from that of the whole body of Christ and we are called 'Sectarian in the extreme' to speak of this. We are to be nothing but **independent** gatherings, each component for itself upon all questions and in no way **bound by the action** of the rest. **The consequences of which are the destruction of all true fellowship and all discipline.**" (A LETTER, 1896, to a brother in Kansas.)

A READING ON ASSEMBLY ORDER

Toronto, Canada-1900

B.C.G.—"Chapter 14:33 (1 Cor.) is on the same line; and we know that it is the chapter that regulates the ministry of the Church when it comes together. It is a sample case. After giving all these directions, he says. 'For God is not the **author of confusion** but peace.' **In all the churches it is the same.** How could the Apostle say this—how could he vouch for the various gatherings if this verse were not so? It is not but that gatherings may differ in their spiritual condition, but there was but **one order**

maintained. There was but **one center; but one order for all the assemblies.** Now this is specially to be noticed, for I was **challenged** more than once **across the sea**, and have been on this side, as to this expression which has been used, as to the 'Circle of fellowship.' A person said to me, I do not agree with what some of you American brethren say as to a Circle of Fellowship. Well, I said, if you can give us a better name to express a **divine fact**, we will be glad for any good name, because we know the name is but human but the **thing is divine**, and we do not want you, in objecting to the **name**, to do **away** with the **thing**. Here is a circle of fellowship here is an order that the apostle can vouch for—that if you leave Corinth and go to Ephesus you will find it there."

F.J.E.—"In connection with the **circle of fellowship**, would you say that in view of the failure that has come in amongst those professing to be actually gathered out to the Name of the Lord, that that 'Circle of Fellowship' is **confined** to those who are holding to the truth of God as it was when the movement first took place?"

B.C.G.—"CERTAINLY."

F.J.E.—"That is to say, to take ourselves, for instance: Is it confined to that "Circle of fellowship' apart from other companies of those called brethren?"

S.R.--"CERTAINLY. We cannot vouch for other people maintaining that which we do not know they are maintaining."

F.J.E.—"If that is the case, we would say we are in the 'circle of fellowship' on what ground: For what reason?"

S.R.—"**To maintain the truth which we find in the Scriptures.**"

F.J.E.—"Then that practically **condemns the other circles.**"

S.R.—"IT DOES. UNQUESTIONABLY, brethren, and I do not believe we ought to have the **slightest hesitation** in saying that we are where we are by conviction, and that by God's GRACE WE MAINTAIN IN LOVE AND LOWLINESS, BUT WITH ALL FIRMNESS, OUR SEPARATE POSITION AS GATHERED TO THE LORD'S NAME IN SUBJECTION TO HIS WORD, and look on our dear brethren in the sects, and our dear brethren who are not, but who are practically forming sections in that way, **we look on them all alike**; we test them all by the Word of God."

F.J.E.—"It would be wrong for me then, believing that I am where the truth is, to say to these other circles: Now let us come together; we are wrong."

S.R.—"CERTAINLY. Why should I confess as **wrong** that which is the **truth of God?**"

A.E.B.—"Another point as to

this. NOT ONLY HAS THE SCRIPTURE PUT US IN THIS POSITION, but certain **circumstances** in connection with our brethren have **compelled** it. We all know that our hearts' desire is not to be separated from them, but it is because they **will not follow the truth**, we have been **forced** into separation from them."

CONFERENCES AS TO THE ASSEMBLY

Held in Plainfield, N. J. 1896.

A circle of fellowship is a necessity. If we have none how can we carry out the order established through the apostle Paul for God's house? On the same principle as we recognize a local company, we **must** recognize a general company. A mere confederacy it is not. We make no terms with one another. We seek only to walk together in obedience to the word of God. People object to the term "circle of fellowship," but they also say "the ground of the one body" is sectarian. Call it what you will; the term may be changed, but the truth of it is there in God's Word. This circle is the only practical representation of the body of Christ. The opposite is independence, and independence in this way is the thing God would not have in a creature. If there be not a common or general judgment, a judgment binding upon all, there is none. There

needs, therefore, "giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

"If we make this keeping the unity of the **body**, we should have to recognize every member of the body of Christ, no matter how they act; but in keeping "the unity of the Spirit" we act for the whole, and discipline does not hinder but helps this. The Lord's Table has to do with our gathering together. We do not inquire merely if a man has certain marks of godliness or morality, but if he is associating

with men who are wrong with God. We are to follow righteousness all the more in a day of break up, and we cannot with fellowship people who are going to make war upon the principles which God has given for our guidance."

May the Lord richly bless the presentation of this most important line of truth, as from those who spoke unto us the Word of God, and considering their godly life, "imitate their faith."—D. T. J.

"A Circle of Fellowship" or Independency?

Another question must now be considered, which unites itself to that which we have been just considering. We shall find that "independency" is one of the most successful means of evasion of Scriptural discipline that could perhaps be imagined,—one of the most successful snares by which the children of God can be seduced into resistance to the will of God, while to themselves they seem to be standing only for the principles of the Word, against "confederacy," for purity, and unsectarian maintenance of the Body of Christ. We must therefore look seriously and with sufficient care into the matter: first, at what independency re-

ally is, and then at the fruits which make manifest the tree.

In its simplest and boldest form, independency appears as the denial of any Scriptural authority for any "circle of fellowship" outside of the individual gathering, wherever it may be; and this denial is made in the interests, as they imagine, of unsectarian recognition of the one Church only, which is the body of Christ. The formation and maintenance of any such circle they maintain, sectarian, and the adoption by such circle of a common discipline is sectarianism full-blown. It constitutes the whole a "party," which may take the Name of Christ, as some at Corinth did, and only be

perhaps on that account to be the more avoided. as making that precious Name an instrument of division.

This charge is not, it may be, that of denying the Name of Christ. but it approaches it so nearly as to make it of the most serious consequence. Those who hold to a circle of fellowship and yet refuse the adoption of a sectarian name. with what is implied in this, can neither afford to give up their claim of gathering simply to the Name of Christ, nor accept the truth of what is charged against them. Let us examine then what is meant by these assertions, neither shaken from our convictions by their boldness, nor refusing to bring all these to the test of Scripture, as often as may be needful. That which is true will only gain in its hold on us by every fresh examination, and the only danger is in this being lightly and not thoroughly carried out. We should be thankful for any suggestions that awaken fresh inquiry.

Now what is a "circle of fellowship"? That **all** such is not forbidden must be believed by the objector himself, if he have but "two or three" gathered with himself in any local assembly. For this, I suppose, is not the whole "assembly of God" there, but something indefinitely less than this. Yet, here there must be within and without, a being,

in some sense, of us or not of us, a something which is saved from being a party, not by having no walls or door, but by its having no **arbitrary**, no merely human, terms of admission. If it have no terms, then it is a mere rabble of lawless men, and as such to be refused by every Christian.

If you say, "No, it is Scripture to which we are subject," that brings in at once the implication that it is Scripture as you see it, not as your fellow-Christians see it; and you take your place as before the Lord, to be judged of Him in regard to this. Your being a separate **something**, a "circle of fellowship," does not constitute you a party: you own Christians everywhere, as members of the body of Christ, and receive them wherever a Scriptural hindrance to their reception does not exist and you speak of being gathered simply to Christ's Name, without an idea that you are making the Name of Christ a badge, or sign. or instrument, of division.

Well, then, **in this place**, at least, there exists a gathering of Christians that I can recognize,—I suppose, **ought to** recognize,—apart from the whole body of Christians in the place. I say, "ought," because I have duties in regard to the assembling of ourselves together; and here alone I find those with whom I can assemble, no unscriptural condition being imposed on

me. Were there another assembly in the same place and of the same character, **then** I should have to ask why they were not together: for the sin of schism is a grave one in Scripture. and I should have of necessity to refuse this.

If, then, in this place, I repeat, there is a gathering that I can own, and must,—suppose, now, I went elsewhere and lived—found perhaps there also one that I had equally to own as gathered to Christ's Name alone, would it be right for me in the new place to refuse to own as a separate company, those in that from which I came, whom, when I was there, I had to own, and whom, if I were now there I should have to own? Is it possible that my going from New York to Boston should make that wrong for me at Boston which at New York would be quite right, and if I went back there, would be right again? If so, that is independency in earnest; or else it is the most curious shifting of right and wrong that one can conceive of; morality shifting every few miles of the road, whichever way I travel. And yet, **if not**, we are connected in principle, to a "circle of fellowship"!

The recognition of each other by such gatherings throughout the world is, therefore, right; and everything opposed to it is false and wrong. Nay, it is impossible to

maintain practically, if principles are of any value to us. For, were I taking the journey spoken of, must I not inquire for those who are of one mind with us in Boston? and would those in Boston expect anything else of me? To refuse a circle of fellowship may be held as a theory: the facts will always be discordant with the theory. **The theory itself cannot be truthfully accepted by any one who has given it any sober reflection**; except it mean independency of the grossest and narrowest kind; that is, associating where one will, and recognizing obligations nowhere but where I will. And this would be indeed the most perfect sectarianism that could well exist.

But we are to recognize the whole body of Christ! Surely, but not their unscriptural associations. In the interests of the body of Christ I refuse denominations; but in the same interests I am bound to accept the circle of unsectarian fellowship. The gracious words which, providing for a day of failure and confusion, sanction the two or three gathered to the Lord's blessed Name, **sanction** such gatherings in every place, and therefore a circle of such gatherings. It would be as sectarian to refuse identification with these as to take our place with the various denominations. Nay, it would be more so. Nor would it save us from

this, to say we were acting for the good of the whole Church of God, when from Scripture itself the disproof is so easy.

Now, another step.

To accept these is to accept their **discipline**. For the Lord's sanction of the gathering is the express sanction of their discipline. Of course, I do not mean by that that they can add to Scripture, or invent a character of discipline that is not found there; nor yet that He could sanction what might be a mistaken judgment. He is the Holy and the True, the Lord and Master of His people always: and that is quite enough to say as to all this. But **authority** for discipline these "two or three" have; and woe to him who resists its rightful exercise: "If he hear not the Church, let him be to thee as a heathen man and a publican" is said of just such feeble gatherings as these.

It is plain that precisely the same thing is to be said for the discipline as for the gathering itself: if it is to be respected at A where it is exercised, it is just as much to be respected at B or at C. If it be the decision of a local matter, then the Lord has plainly put it into the hands of those who are in circumstances to judge of it aright, though protest and appeal are surely to be listened to, and they are bound to satisfy consciences where honestly exercised about it.

As to a question of truth, as such it affects all consciences; it can be put before all: no local gathering has authority in any such matter: it would be making a creed to be subscribed. The truth as to Christ is a deeper and more vital matter, for we are gathered to His Name. Where truth of this kind is subverted the gathering exists no more, except as an instrument in the enemy's hand, and is to be refused, with all who take part with it.

If on the other hand, the question be of facts, then those who have them are bound (if these affect more than the local gathering) to make them known to their brethren; and here a circular letter may rightly have its place, not to establish a rule or principle of action, but as a witness: which of course is open to question, as all facts are, if there be contrary evidence, or that given be insufficient. No circular has authority in itself: it is purely a question of facts and of the credibility of the testimony.

With these limitations, which are the results of the frailty and fallibility which are common to us all, we have necessarily to own a circle of fellowship and the discipline connected with it, if we would be free from the charge of real independency.

And real independency is not of God, but always and everywhere

acts against Him. It is to make the members of the same body say to each other, "we have no need of you," and to deny the unity of the Spirit which should pervade the body. The more we lament and refuse the sectarianism which exists, the more are we compelled, and shall rejoice to own the body of Christ wherever possible. And this circle of fellowship, while it is not the "body," furnishes us with the means of owning this in a truthful and holy way, so far as the state of ruin in which the Church exists permits it to be done. With love to all Christ's own,—with an open door for the reception of all according to the conditions of truth and holiness,—such a circle is not sectarian, but a protest against it, while the meeting that refuses connection with it is sectarian in fullest reality.

And this is what is meant by the "ground" of the one body. It is as different as possible from any claim to **be** the one body, and does not in the least imply any sectarian conditions of intelligence in order to communion. The maintenance of a common discipline is in no wise sectarian, but **part** (and an essential part) **of that communion itself**: absolutely necessary if the holiness of God be the same thing wherever it is found, and not a thing for the "two or three" anywhere to trifle with as they list.

Independency, in setting aside the practical unity of the Church of God, sets aside a main guard of holiness itself. It makes this no object of common care; it does not seek common exercise about it. It releases from the sense of responsibility as to the house of God: it is my own house I am to keep clean after my own fashion. And this real laxity as to the people of God at large (but which is so consoling to an unexercised conscience, that it is the great charm undoubtedly to multitudes today) naturally has the effect of lowering one's estimate of holiness altogether, and so prevents my own house being kept really clean.

Where, however, a circle of fellowship is **in fact** maintained, along with and spite of the protest against it, or where there is not the maintenance of a common discipline—where perhaps as the natural fruit of independency also, the unholy principle is contended for that an assembly cannot be judged for that which would compel the judgment of an individual, there, as is natural to expect, any local discipline almost can be evaded by a little dexterity. If the gathering at B will not receive you from A, it will from C. and C will receive you from A. No one is safe any where from the violation of a discipline which he himself recognizes as a Scriptural one. Any particular per-

son, if he be not too prominent, becomes lost to the eye amid the maze of bewildering differences. He who has conscience, and would fain be clear, has soon to resign himself to a general hope that what looks so like confusion will in the end conserve the interests of holiness; or in despair, to wash his hands of what he cannot avoid.

Yet it is an ensnaring system; for in this way pessimism and optimism both can find apology for it, and go on with it. One gets free of an amazing amount of trouble; and while not seeming to have given up all ecclesiastical ties, as many have, yet be practically as free as they for the gospel and from the wearying responsibility of being one's brother's keeper. Why should we be? When we only get our trouble for our pains, find a narrow path instead of the broad, open one, which is so pleasant to all of us, and for this have only to shut our eyes at the proper time, and ignore what it seems we cannot help.

And in fact the countless small breaches of independency make less show than the terrible rents which we are exposed to otherwise. Why not let this sad-faced Merarite go, with his pins and cords of the tabernacle always getting into entanglement, and be content with Kohath and with Gershom?

Still, if the **TABERNACLE OF THE LORD** is to be set up in the

wilderness, how shall we do without the pins and cords?

In result it will be found that it is the truth of God which suffers, and tends to pass away and be lost. What wonder when we begin with choosing what we will have of it, and what we will discard? **Fellowship** becomes a thing of most uncertain quality: and what wonder, if obedience to the Word has anything to do with fellowship? **Worship** is largely displaced in behalf of service: for we have lost the necessary pins and cords. We may go on with the help of what truth we can still borrow and find room for; but the truth tends somehow continually to slip away from us; and in the jangle of many utterances, it is ever getting to be of less account.

One's voice may be little heard in a day like this; but I would do what I can to press upon the people of the Lord first of all their Master's claim. I press that this independency, little as one may imagine it, little as many may care to entertain it even as a question, means ultimately ship wreck to the truth of Christ, because it means independency of **Him**. One may find in it plenty of associates, for it makes little demands upon one and gives the kind of liberty which is so coveted today. The authority of Christ is not in it. It may support itself by the help of

other names—names in repute as Christians too—and be in honor. It cannot have the commendation which Philadelphia, spite of its “little power,” finds from her gra-

acious Lord:— “THOU HAST KEPT MY WORD, AND NOT DENIED MY NAME.”

—F. W. G. (From “A Divine Movement”)

A Question and Answer

Ques.—So much has been made of late years of the doctrine of a “circle of fellowship” (which is new to me), and I would like to ask what truths are necessary to be held in order to be in such “Circle”? and who has the authority to say who is in or out of said “Circle”? Do not the boards of the tabernacle represent individual members of the Body of Christ, indwelt by the same Spirit? Would not such a doctrine tend to great positional pride and consequent looseness of walk and practice? I can find no scriptural solution for any body of Christians being in any degree above their brethren elsewhere in the eyes of God; does not godliness, with humility and self-judgment, constitute the highest place wherever found? It seems to me that the time has come to hear the last call of our Lord to individual testimony (Rev. 3:20). It must be a blessed place for those who have faith to take it, and who cannot conscientiously go on with the worldliness and unrighteousness that they have to go on with in

the professed assemblies of God today. If wrong, I am willing to be shown.

Ans.—How does it come that you know that “so much has been made of late years of the doctrine of ‘a circle of fellowship’,” and that it is “news” to you? Is it like the Bible to many, who know that “much fuss is made about it.” and know nothing of it? In some things ignorance is a virtue; in others it is guilt.

But to your questions one by one: First of all, let us say with sorrow, that had not the Church gone astray, there would now be seen all over the world but one circle of fellowship, that of the Church of God. But she has gone astray to such an extent that it has been said her annals were “the annals of hell.” What formed the “Protestant” circle of fellowship? It was the abominations of what called itself “the only and true church.” And since Protestants have formed a new circle of fellowship, by separating from

Rome, what causes have they not given for necessary circles of fellowship out of them also. Would you remain among a people where "Higher Criticism" makes God a liar—substituting their dictum for His Word; denying the Deity and virgin-birth of Christ, the atoning sacrifice, and the resurrection of our Saviour? If you did, you would in the end become like them; for the Word of God says: "Evil communications corrupt good manners," and the Word of God makes no mistakes. If you did not, you would find yourself separated from them. 2 Timothy 2:15, **et seq.**, treats of such conditions, and gives us instruction how to meet them. Verse 20 gives the corrupted conditions; verse 21 the remedy for such as desire to be faithful; verse 22 gives the new formed circle of fellowship, which extends to those in the same path. As you see, it is not "what truths are necessary to be held in order to be in such circle." It is a divine path accepted, which places one with others who are of a like mind, willing to accept the reproach of Christ.

Such a circle will not pretend to be the Church, the Body of Christ, but it will confess "there is one Body," and that it is **as members of it** they assemble together, separated from others only to avoid the evils from which the Word of

God bids them to be separate.

That there is danger here of "positional pride" we know but too well. Is there any less danger in what you mention as "the last call of our Lord to individual testimony?" We have never met with greater pride than with individuals who can associate with no one. Of course in any case it must be **individual** faithfulness, or else I am only following others—a miserable thing, bringing shame and grief in the end. But, in faithfully taking the path appointed of God, if we are humble, we soon find ourselves in the company of others.

You ask: "Does not godliness, with humility and self judgment, constitute the highest place wherever found?" You confound **state** with **place**. A man may be in the highest place, but in a bad state. Israel were by the grace of God set in the highest place among the nations of the earth, and they fell into the lowest state.

We do not know what is your ecclesiastical place, but we pity anyone who has to go on with the state you describe among "professed assemblies of God today." Even the apostles found in their day plenty of evils to correct among the assemblies of God, but the Word of God ministered by them was heeded. (*Help and Food*, Vol. 32, p. 250).