

A Word on the Fellowship of Saints,
to any who are puzzled about the English Bethesda Question.

G. V. Wigram.

CBA5622(4).

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
No. 1. "War to the Knife.".....	3
No. 2. The Church of God.....	4
No. 3. "God and I.".....	5
No. 4. Reality.....	5

There is a Man, a glorified Man, sitting now on the throne of God in heaven — the Man that is Jehovah's Fellow. To Him, God, the Holy Spirit, has borne testimony in the Scriptures; to Him He calls the sinner's attention; to Him He guides the eye of faith of each believer, and there He will fix it. For He, the only begotten Son of the Father, is the sole One on whom and on whose life and works as Saviour, God, even the Father, can rest in complacency.

That life, those works, were unto eternal salvation and redemption for sinful man. In Him, and through His life and death, and resurrection and ascension, the sinner can now, through faith, find rest with God in His glory, and receive the free gift of the Holy Spirit, and grace to be full thereof and walk therein.

Permit, I entreat you, one whose name is not worth naming (save as found *in* Him) to beseech you to think of Him — for His sake who has claims over you, and for God's sake who is a jealous God, and who insists on the claims which He has recognised in the Son of His love, being recognised by you — own Him *alone* as worthy. He is the only Man worthy of God's thinking about, and worthy of any man's thinking about. But He is worthy — for His name of Jesus means "Jehovah a-saving."

Do not, I beseech you, go on setting one fallen man's name against another fallen man's name, sinners' names against sinners' names, as you have done in your intercourse about questions in which the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit alone should be cared for, and the honour due to God. You have done so, till you have well nigh forgotten the Sinless Man, the One who, because He knew no sin, could be made a sin-offering, and who was made and did make Himself such, that so, through faith, we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Unconsciously, it may have been, at first, you have been setting one merely human name against another merely human name, until the name of 'Jesus,' and the revelation in it, has been forgotten amid talk about men and their doings and claims, which are of as little worth and meaning as would be any letter from the Alphabet (as an M, or a D, or a W), in comparison with that blessed person (Jesus) and His works.

The Spirit is thus grieved and quenched; and blindness, and the fervour of party spirit gets sway, and a heavy fog of mystification easily rises and broods over your actings; humbling is it to think of.

It is a poor sinner in himself, and not a prophet, who writes to you; but, in the light of the Sinless Man (Peerless and without equal, He!); 'tis one who fears lest - *under that cloud of mystification* which rests upon you — there be another Spirit (not man's), far more subtle than Ahithophel's of old, — far less scrupulous than he, — or at his rear, dangers as to the honour of Christ. For if His name be used by any as a cover for darkness and evil, and the name of "the Church" be used as the name of a place where those on earth, who are indifferent to Christ's honour and to holiness, in faith, doctrine, morality, or walk, may congregate, His name is put to shame and the Holy Spirit dishonoured.

Would that I were mistaken as to your danger. If not, may God give you deliverance, and victory over every lie and delusion of the Wicked One.

So prays

Yours, in brokenness of spirit, W.

Nelson, N.Z., Sept. 24, 1874.

A Cry From Bochim.

G. V. Wigram.

Third Edition.

Publisher: Crocker & Cooper.

CBA5622(9).

Introduction.

Confession and humiliation suit, and in a peculiar way, become the children of God in the present day. Neither the glory of God, nor the honour of Christ, nor the presence of the Holy Ghost, has been faithfully cared for by us; and, the church — where is it? and what is its condition upon earth?

But it is not the wide range of Christendom, or the narrower compass of England, to which I look. Is not confession and humiliation called for from many a one in the narrow circle into which these lines may come?

Humiliation and confession for what? Let each think — let each speak — for God and for Christ: and truthfully (according to his own best and eternal interests in the Spirit) for himself, too, in giving the answer. I will do so here for myself; let others see how far they are wide of my mark.

Christ gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world. The friendship of the world is enmity against God, and the minding of earthly things is enmity to the cross of Christ.

Now, speaking for God and for Christ, what shall I say as to myself — as to my brethren in this respect? Are we — have we been — *practically*, in heart, and thought, and action, that which *we are in Spirit* — "not of this world, even as Christ is not of this world"?

I speak not now of *worldliness*, as the men of the world, or even as men (Christian men) upon this earth speak; but I speak of worldliness according to the sanctuary.

Peter's self-complacency and self-confidence, and the mighty energy of personal love to his master, which (working with mixed motives, and from an unhumiliated heart in him,) led him to use the sword and to cut off the ear of the High Priest's servant, was fleshliness and worldliness when weighed

in the sanctuary. There has been this, I judge, to be confessed by many of the best in our day — zeal without knowledge; right as to its object; wrong as to many a thing in oneself as vindicator; and wrong as to many a means and course pursued: and much of this through self-complacency and self-confidence in our own line of things.

My conviction is, that worldliness and earthly-mindedness have blinded the eyes, and hardened the hearts, to an extent very few of us have any idea of; and that, as a consequence, no case touching upon the morality of the church's walk can be fairly judged by the mass of believers. In cases innumerable which have occurred, the affections to Christ Himself have not been lively enough to make persons indignant at open insults put upon Christ, and determined to stand apart from that which, in its association, was minded to sanction dishonour done to Him.

God forbid that we should use worldliness and earthly-mindedness, or the pretence of confessing them, as a cloak to cover up indifference of the heart's affections to Christ, or to gloss over want of zeal, to separate from every association with those that avow and act upon a liberty to be indifferent to His honour.

Yet, while I would clear myself of the conduct which looks like indifference to Christ, and from all association with those who plead and act upon their liberty to think their own thoughts in this respect, the question will rise, — And what is it, after all, that hinders so many dear to you, and dear to Christ, from seeing that His honour has been assailed? The true answer, I fear, is worldliness and earthly-mindedness — the fruit of our own doings. Now I avow this; for I do believe a more Nazarite walk, on my part, and on that of some others, might have given power to act upon consciences; and some how or the other, to get them separate from a course in which I dare not walk — than walk in which I would rather walk alone the rest of my earthly days. Christ's honour has been assailed; the morality of the church has been assailed — directly by some, and indirectly by others, who do not care so much for their Lord and master as to be willing to separate from association with those who have openly blasphemed Him.

I own that the low, earthly-minded, worldly state of saints, which cannot meet this is a consequence of the Holy Spirit having been grieved and quenched.

I desire to go down as low as possible, bearing any and all blame; but, come what may, never to sanction that which corrupts the morality of the church — never to be tolerant to that which insults Christ; and never to be identified by association with that which cares neither for the glory of Christ, nor for the morality of His church, nor for its unity.

Plymouth, January 23rd. 1857.

No. 1. "War to the Knife."

Yes: War! even to the knife, to all *indifferentism* (in the heart of the sinner saved by grace) as to the honour of Christ the Saviour, and as to the holiness and unity of the church of the living God.

Christian? does it seem a strange thing to you to be called upon to circumcise your heart of all superfluity of naughtiness, and to purge it of all indifference and carelessness as to the God that gave His Son for you, — as to the Son of Man that bore the curse for you (He the Just One, in place of us the unjust)? Is it a hard saying, — is it, in any way, *unnatural* to you to be called upon for a little bit of zeal for Christ, in the feelings of the new nature and of the Spirit? *Unnatural!* when every servant of every earthly monarch is held responsible for the honour of that monarch; if so, go to the Army and Navy, and see how, there, responsibility and British feeling pervade and fire every loyal heart as to Her

Majesty's honour.

And has God in His Sovereignty called me (chiefest of sinners as I was) to be a son and heir of God? Has Christ, in life here below, — in death upon the Cross, — in resurrection laboured for *me*, and has He, in ascension glory, called me by name, made Himself known to me by faith, and given me His Spirit to lead me to glory — and do you suppose I desire to be lukewarm to Himward? No, Cursed is, and cursed be, all that which prevails to hinder that love of His from entering and warming the heart. We love Him, because He first loved us. Blessed be God for that love of His shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. May the love of Christ constrain us — bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. S.S.

No. 2. The Church of God.

God has "A Church:" God has not been ashamed to connect *His* name with one church — the church of the living God. (1 Tim. 3: 15.) Oft He calls it "The Church of God." (See Acts 20: 28; 1 Cor. 15: 9; Gal. 1: 13; 1 Tim. 3: 5.) This it was which Christ called (Matt. 16: 18.) "My Church." And oh, how wondrous! (Eph. 1: 22) Christ given of God to be head over all things to the church, *which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all*. (See also Eph. 3: 10; Eph. 5: 23, 25, 27, 29, 32; Col 1: 18, 24.)

Child of God! can you *show* me this church? I have a picture of it, dear to my heart, in the Scriptures; but I have sought that which the Word of God describes as the church, and have not found it, visit could once be found at Jerusalem, at Ephesus, etc.

What am I to do? Humble myself down into the dust, so far as I know how (and I have sought to do so these last 25 years), not because saints are scattered but because of man's entire failure in responsibility to God as to the church? Then you will say, "You look to see what God will do *for you* and His saints as to communion." Not so; if my eye be single, I look then to see what God will do *for* His own honour, and for the glory of Christ, *with all* His believing people, under these circumstances; and this is quite another thing. He may count it to be for His honour and for the glory of Christ, and for our blessing in the Spirit, to make us taste the fruit of man's doings, and the failure, and taste it with inward bitterness and individual experience. May God do with us as seemeth Him good. No union, no communion which is not that of the church of God, in the power of the name of the Lord Jesus, could satisfy the Spirit of God in us.

Has not OUR taste of communion of saints assumed a wrong place in many hearts? Are not many shirking the cross, of bearing, outwardly, a state of things which God has brought up to make us realize what we had concealed from ourselves as to failure.

Let the Lord do as seemeth Him good. Do thou study His word to see what the church of God is, and avoid on one hand the narrowing down of truth to human forms and rigid crystallizations, and on the other, the neutralization of truth by confounding multitudinous association, and intercourse with communion of saints. And, above all things, judge self, and correct self, rather than the churches. The formative truth which acted on man's heart, to form the church at first, remains; and each individual soul can say, "Lo! I come to. do thy will, O God" — as to all it has to do: and as to all it has to suffer, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" S.S.

No. 3. "God and I."

Faith sets a man with God, and as an individual, alone with God. Abel acted as an individual; Enoch walked alone with God; Noah found grace in His sight; Abram was called out from all, and was the friend of God. Joseph and Moses, and Samuel and David, and Daniel, and all the worthies of Faith's household, each found his springs to be in God — and his guidance to be from God.

How individual, and solitary too (not only on the ground of His being the only sinless, the only perfect One, but also in *the mode* of His walk), was the Blessed Lord! "Lo! I come to do thy will O God." "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" These were the mottoes of His life here below.

How beautifully, too, in the thief upon the cross do we find his faith (divinely taught) setting him *alone* with God — able to condemn, not only his own past course, but all that the religious of that day were doing; and able to give to Christ a title true of Him alone from among men. "This man hath done nothing amiss." He adds, Lord! remember me . . . in thy kingdom And the Lord's word to Peter is to be noted, "If I will that he [John] tarry till I come, *what is that to thee*, FOLLOW THOU ME."

The secret of all practical holiness in a believer is found in this individual walk with God — a walk which, as it keeps him in the light, where Christ is at the right hand of God, keeps him in humble self-judgment, because he sees the contrast between Christ and himself — yet in firmness, because he has to do with God, and acts for and from God.

Directly I can say, God's word proclaims a thing to be unholy, I am to cease from it *at once*. It is unholy *to me* at least, and to tamper with it would be defilement. Every godly soul (that knows even Rom. 14) would assent to this: every godly soul must say, "Obey God rather than man; obey God according to your light — and do not go beyond it."

I have been asked (alas for the askers!) when so acting, "Are you infallible? are you going to lord it over the conscience of others?" My answer is simple; I walk with God, and judge *myself*; not an inch for me on the road God's word seems to me to prohibit; right onward where the word enjoins me to go forward.

'Tis replied, "How do you know you are right?" I answer, "While walking in dependence upon God alone to lead me to see His mind, that I may do it — do you think He will not be faithful to Himself? (John 7: 17.) And as to the conscience of others, I lord it over no soul. Let each walk with God; but only let each remember that if my walk is with God, alas! for him whose walk is not in the same pathway; be he before me or behind."

There is no holiness in communion, no "communion of *saints*," apart from this solitary walk with God — of the saints as individuals.

The restless disquietude of many around convinces me *they* are not walking with God. S.S.

No. 4. Reality.

The power which draws saints into communion, by the faith of a once crucified but now glorified Lord, is the Holy Ghost. It will be found that it is *the purpose of the heart to walk with God alone*, which is the *inward* fitness for communion of saints, and not intellectual intelligence as to the doctrine of the church, Intellectual intelligence about what the church was, and should outwardly be, may lead to narrow sectarianism; and knowledge of the principles of the church, without reference to the form,

may lead to multitudinism (as it is called); but to blend principle with practice, in this matter, is the result of walking with God. A common purpose gives a natural and a happy association;* and when that purpose is the glory of God and the honour of Christ, in a self-denying walk with God, the holiness and the self-devotedness of the purpose will bring and keep hearts and minds together; and, thank God, nothing else can do it.

*Each of the twelve apostles had left all to follow Christ. This purpose to follow Him, this life of following Him, gave them an unity and a communion; just so, though in a higher way, faith gives to each believer now, a life of communion with God; obedience to Him, and praise to Him, through the Spirit and in the Spirit.

In the promise of Matthew 18: 20: — "Where two or three are gathered together *in my name*, there am I in the midst of them." The words, "in my name," must not be forgotten. The gathering must be according to the "power and character of the Saviour-God," otherwise it is not in the name of Jesus.

We used to mourn man's dishonouring of God, in the power which Satan had, through the worldliness and fleshliness of unbelieving believers in our day, — and how, in consequence of this, the dear children of God were divided one from another, and some found in the Roman, and some in the reformed, and some in the various dissenting churches; but no manifested visible oneness. This is just as true now as it was twenty-five years ago. But some who thought to work deliverance on the earth, set themselves up, and have been broken. Do I mourn this their breaking, then? No; though I do mourn that, instead of having humbled themselves for the state common to the Lord's church upon earth (which would have been godly and humble), it now comes out that they thought that they were to work deliverance upon earth. Well, the heart (my heart) is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.

Who (save God) would have thought that the discovery of irremediable ruin would have been so used? A bit of knowledge as to "what the church was, and what it was not," turned to mean, "The temple of the Lord are *we*; come with us, and we, we will do you good." I bless God the bubble is burst. Blow it a second time; let who will do it.

Many of these disappointed ones have returned to evils they formerly deplored in the establishment, in dissent, etc.; some of them, alas! have set up their union (be it multitudinous or sectarian, or both together), and are so angered with God's breach upon them, that they will never forgive those from whom they are broken, until their own idol is mended. A few (would they were more) have acknowledged the just judgment of God upon pride and folly — have accepted the chastening at His hand, and their broken idol — have not returned to the evils they once left; but have sought to return to Bochim, and there to walk humbly with God.

When I think of the break of "ourselves" (as some speak,) I say, "Thank God! True and righteous art Thou!" When I think of how little the children of God, in our day (in church and dissent, and everywhere), respond to the glory of God and the honour of Christ, as the church should do, I mourn; and yet if, as to the church on earth, the Spirit of God is a grieved and quenched Spirit, may I find grace to have my spirit in sympathy with God's and to feel aright and as He does, as to the present state of things on earth among His professing people. S.S.