

A Draft Appeal

W. Kelly, August, 1898

"For circulation among brethren still cleaving to the 'Christ of God'."

Beloved Brethren,

We write to you about the anomalous state of divisions feeling that it is not more to our Lord's dishonour than to our common shame and loss. Do you not feel it too?

We are apart from no question of the faith, from no difference as to due order. We acknowledge for practice the same divine principles. It is well known that we have sought to remove whatever barriers may hinder, as far as we can with a good conscience in subjection to the word. That the enemy should seek to frustrate our being gathered together in one (John 11: 52) one understands, but why should you or we acquiesce in his scattering those who should be united? We do not doubt that 1 Cor. 1: 10-12, Eph. 4: 2-6, Phil. 2: 1-4, are still weighty in your eyes as in ours.

With you we cherish the place divinely given, to faith and love, of gathering to the Lord's name and would each judge himself for all that has been done inconsistently with it. Neither you nor we would individually nor together consent to weaken the responsibility of maintaining at all cost the person and work of Christ, the present action of the Holy Spirit or the authority of God's word.

Holding the head we welcome the members walking in truth and in love as at the first, not without profit from all that has been since. Alas! it cannot be for such as compromise Him who is the true God and life eternal. Ought it not to be for all who confess Him truly? Who or what forbids?

We avoid disputations and address all who with ourselves value no unity save of the Spirit. We believe that to get rid of obstacles to its better enjoyment and manifestation is for the Lord's glory and for the blessing of the saints. It would also disarm the enemy of a permanent occasion for stumbling the weak and for reproach to the truth.

Free to confess failures on our part we appeal to all others involved in the divisive action of 1881, and ask, Does Scripture sanction settling down contentedly with things as they are? Do we not alike own one body and one Spirit, even as called in one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all? Can any rest indifferent to a scattering without parallel and without an effort? Have you, however, no faith in or desire for the healing Grace of our God?

A notion prevails that reunion must be individual. It is a modern thought at issue with our past convictions and action. Where does Scripture lay down anything of the sort? It does show us the principle of collective sins met collectively, individual individually. We have dealt individually and rightly with an individual seceder or with a person emerging from a sect. But grace handled the truth in another spirit when a rupture came in, however sadly, among those gathered. Take as a comparatively recent instance, what some have not forgotten, the episode of Mr. A. Stewart, who broke up the assembly in Jersey by forcing a discipline which, spiritual souls could not acknowledge to be of God. Mr. Darby in concurrence with brethren of London of that day drew up a letter in which the saints of both meetings, then divided and breaking bread separately, were exhorted to receive one another and meet together as before. But Mr. S. insisted on his discipline and refused, thereby losing recognition and afterwards going from bad to worse, while those willing to act in grace had the confidence of their

brethren. No man of weight then doubted that the re-union of divided meetings was right and comely before the Lord. To insist on individual reception in such circumstances would only be self-righteous and an effectual bar to His will of gathering His own in one. Surely as compared with the painful case of Jersey there is even less ground for hesitation now.

All who concur will feel the call to approach the Lord in confession as to the past and prayer for the present. Meetings could follow for united supplication and conference. Private questions could be fittingly enquired into in private.

"Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in uncorruptness."