

**GROUNDS AND METHODS
 OF ADMISSION TO
 SEALING ORDINANCES**

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Grounds and Methods of Admission to Sealing Ordinances by D. D. Bannerman

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D. D. BANNERMAN

**GROUNDS AND METHODS
 OF ADMISSION TO
 SEALING ORDINANCES**

GROUNDS AND METHODS
OF
ADMISSION TO SEALING ORDINANCES;
OR,
WHO SHOULD BE RECEIVED TO THE LORD'S TABLE?
WHOSE CHILDREN SHOULD BE BAPTISED?
HOW SHOULD WE RECEIVE YOUNG COMMUNICANTS?

BY
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1882.

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P R E F A C E.

THE Paper, which forms the first two chapters of this little work, was written at the request of the Programme Committee appointed by the First General Council of the Presbyterian Alliance. It was read in part at the Council at Philadelphia in September, 1880, and appears in the volume of their proceedings. It is now published separately with a few slight alterations, and with an additional chapter on "Methods of Admission to the Lord's Table for the first time." The origin of the book will explain one or two allusions which I have not thought it needful to remove. The fact of its having been prepared in part for a Council of the Reformed Churches may also serve as an apology for its bearing somewhat more of an academic and ecclesiastical cast than it might otherwise have had.

D. D. B.

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CHAPTER I.

WHO SHOULD BE RECEIVED TO THE LORD'S TABLE ?

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."

"But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup."

"If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. . . . Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth."—1 Cor. x. 16; xi. 28; v. 11-13.

THE two meanings in which I shall chiefly use the word "Church" in this chapter are those regarding which there is general agreement in Reformed Christendom.

1. The "Church" means in Scripture the whole company of the elect—"all who have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ the Head."¹ "*Ecclesia universalis*,"

¹ Conf. c. xxv. 1.

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says Luther, quoting with emphatic approval words of John Huss, which had been condemned by the Church of Rome, "*est prædestinatorum universitas.*"¹

This "General Assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven," all agree to call the "Church invisible," in this sense at least that, although all its members are seen and known of God, it is impossible that they should now be gathered into one place, or that each should be seen and known certainly by the eye of man.

2. The word Church in Scripture means a society or fellowship in any place of professed believers, or "visible saints"—to use the old-fashioned phrase—meeting together stately for worship, and *visible* in their associated capacity to the eyes of men.² It is not needful for our present purpose to inquire whether this society is to be confined to the single congregation worshipping together, or whether, as Presbyterians believe, there is Scripture warrant for saying that the principle of representation may come in, and the unity and responsibilities of the Church visible be carried further. Nor need we refer now to that doctrine of the catholic visible

¹ Köstlin, *Luther's Lehre von der Kirche*. Stuttg. 1853, p. 9.

² Owen, *Works* (Geold's ed.) xv. 252 f. 262, 320 f. Banner-man, *The Church of Christ*, l. 11 f. 15.

Church, the kingdom of Christ on earth, which holds so marked a place in the Westminster standards, and in the thoughts of the great ecclesiastical divines of the seventeenth century.¹

We have no occasion in this chapter to go beyond the two senses of the word now indicated, using it to denote, *first*, the whole company of those who are Christ's; and *secondly*—what all admit to be the *unit* at least, of the Church as manifested on earth—the worshipping congregation, gathered in the name of Christ, and joined together on the basis of some common relation to him. What kind of relation, and *how* to be tested, is what we shall have to consider presently.

The Church, therefore, is essentially a fellowship—a *communion*. It consists of those “called out”—as the name *ἐκκλησία* suggests—from the promiscuous multitude, and *gathered together* for common ends. And in the first and highest sense the Church is essentially, and from its very nature as defined, a “pure communion.”

Setting aside for the present such cases as that of the infant children of believers, and keeping to that of members in complete standing, the true Church as existing on earth is the fellowship of true believers with their Lord and with each other, and of such *only*. “All saints who are

¹ Walker, *Theology and Theologians of Scotland*. Edin. 1872. Lect. iv., “Doctrine of the Visible Church.”