

Divine Fellowship

ITS BOND
: BASIS :
NATURE
AUTHORITY
ETC.

By Alfred Mace



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DIVINE FELLOWSHIP.

“God is faithful by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”—1 Cor. 1 : 9.

Its Bond.

It is of the utmost possible importance if we would be intelligently in the mind of God that we should not only enjoy the privilege of the Gospel as *individual* believers, knowing our sins forgiven, possessing perfect peace with God, and “acceptance in the Beloved,” but that we should also appropriate our portion of those *collective* blessings that are the common property of the household of faith. “Fellowship” is one of them. There is a living divine partnership—a mutual bond of association into which all the people of God have been brought by His sovereign Call. It is a partnership outside mere humanity as such. It is divine. None but those who have passed through the spiritual curriculum of new birth and redemption have any part in it. The various orders of human “fellowships” such as Free Masons and Odd Fellows, initiate their members by a process of certain formalities. The hand of man has no part whatever in that of which we speak.

It is God’s prerogative alone. Man cannot bring into it nor can he put any out of it.

It is not forgotten, however, that “fellowship” has its subjective as well as objective viewpoint ; its practical, and experimental aspect, as well as its positional.

In that Epistle so characteristic of experience—Philippians—we read of “Fellowship in the Gospel” 1 : 5 ; “Fellowship of the Spirit,” 2 : 1 ; “Fellowship of His sufferings,” 3 : 1, all of which are to be so much desired ; but in this article and others (D.V.) to follow it is proposed to set before the Christian reader something of the nature, character and extent of that “divine fellowship” to which he and all the children of God have been “called.”

(1). “His Son.”

The great outstanding figure of this living association and that which holds all together is the blessed Person of the

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Lord Jesus Christ. In fact it is His "fellowship;" no wonder then that His glories are presented to us in a variety of ways in the verse that heads this article—His deity, His humanity and His exaltation to the right hand of God, where He has been "made both Lord and Christ" stand as sentinels, to guard the entrance to this privileged circle. Socinian, Arian, Christian Scientist, Russelite, Christadelphian, Spiritist, or Mormon cannot enter here.

That it is "the fellowship of His Son" is sufficient to bar the way to any who deny His Divine attributes and essential Godhead.

It is of "The Son" that it is said "Thy throne, O GOD, is for ever and ever." Psalm 45 : 6-7 ; Heb. 1 : 8.

It is "The Son" by Whom the worlds were made and by Whose power they subsist and Who will in due time fold them up as a garment and change them whilst He Himself remains eternally the same. Heb. 1 : 2, Col. 1 : 17, Heb. 1:12.

It was upon "The Son" that the heavens were opened and the Father's voice saluted Him as the object of His delight. Luke 3 : 22.

When doubt and speculation were rife with reference to Him in the days of His flesh, Peter, through the revelation of the Father boldly confesses Him to be "The Son of the Living God" upon which' confession the church would be built and against which all the powers of darkness would be impotent. Matt. 16 : 6.

Saul of Tarsus, mad with opposition, is met on the Damascus road by "Jesus" who is revealed in him as Son of God and straightway went and preached Him as such in the Damascus synagogue. Gal. 1 : 6, Acts 9 : 20.

Later on he is joined in this mighty Evangel with other fellow-labourers "for the *Son of God*, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus was not yea and nay but in Him was yea for all the promises of God in Him are yea and in Him Amen unto the glory of God by us." 2 Cor. 1 : 19-20.

The blind beggar receiving his sight at the Pool of Siloam through "a man called Jesus" and braved all kinds of persecution for His sake, afterwards believed in Him as "the Son of God" and "worshipped Him." John 9 : 11, 35-38.

That which marked Him out and distinguished Him, as

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Son of God from all others was resurrection, not only in raising Lazarus, the widow's son and Jairus' daughter, but preeminently in raising Himself from the dead. (Rom. 1 : 4).

"Destroy this temple," said He, "and in three days I will raise it up," and He did it notwithstanding all the legions of earth and hell arrayed against Him.

Besides many other signs (miracles) attesting the glory of His Person and the divinity of His mission there are *seven* in particular recorded in John's Gospel beginning with the water turned into wine in Cana of Galilee to the last when He appeared to Thomas the materialistic—unbelieving believer. "But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, *the Son of God*, and that believing ye might have life through His name." (John 20 : 31).

The man who overcomes the world is the man who believes that Jesus is "the Son of God." (1 John 5 : 5).

This emancipating truth was delineated by the greatest Christian possibly that ever lived—Paul the apostle, who lived by the faith of the *Son of God* "who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Gal. 2 : 20).

The gifts bestowed by the Ascended Lord have in view "the perfecting of the saints till we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of *the Son of God*—unto a perfect man." (Eph. 4 : 13.)

Turn up these passages of Scripture, reader, and verify them for yourself and thus see what a galaxy of glory centres in the Son of God telling how immense is the privilege of being in such a "fellowship."

(2) "Jesus Christ."

He who is "over all God blessed for ever" is none the less really and truly man. The "One mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself a ransom for all." In the essential greatness of His godhead He reaches up to all the infinitude of the divine ; yet having taken flesh and blood He can reach down to men in all the depth of their distance, ruin and need.

But it must be stated in the clearest and most unequivocal manner that, as to His manhood, He was One by Himself.

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There never was another of His kind and class. "That holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Adam originally was innocent, and after his fall was sinful—a state passed on to all his posterity. Jesus Christ the anointed Saviour stands alone in the perfection of His human nature.

The Second Man, the Last Adam whilst really and truly man is of another order—holy—and incapable of sinning. "In Him was no sin." "He *knew* no sin." He did no sin. He is the woman's Seed—born of the Virgin—conceived in the power of the Holy Spirit—untainted and sinless: no poison from the federal head of a fallen race entered into His composition. His own words are—"The prince of this world cometh and hath NOTHING IN ME." The integrity and purity of His participation in flesh and blood must be maintained at all costs. He unites in His One Person both the human and the divine nature; He is God and He is Man, yet not two persons, but one—God's Son, Jesus Christ.

This inscrutable mystery was never intended to be a matter for discussion in the theological dissecting room where so called "higher critics" and religious experts could display their analytical powers, landing them eventually as it must necessarily do, into various shades of "modernism" from the evening twilight to the blackness of spiritual midnight.

The blood-redeemed saint accepting his Lord's absolute dictum that "no one knows the Son but the Father." Matt. 11:27 bows in adoring wonder and praise at the impenetrable mystery of God manifest in the flesh and that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." (1 Tim. 3:16, Heb. 13:8.)

(3) "Our Lord."

We pass on now from His Personal glories to what may be termed "official."

On the day of Pentecost in that wonderful address when three thousand souls were converted we hear the Apostle Peter saying "Therefore let all the house of Israel know

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assuredly that *God hath made* that same Jesus whom *ye have crucified both Lord and Christ.*" (Acts 2 : 36.)

This was something acquired ; something that never was His before. It is what He has *been made in heaven* after having been rejected and crucified on earth. He is Jehovah. He is God, and could not *be made* either in any sense—but the Man whom the nation had placed on a malefactor's gibbet has been put in the loftiest pinnacle in glory, "made both Lord and Christ."

This is not a repetition of what we hear proclaimed at His birth, "A Saviour which is Christ the Lord." Luke 2 : 11, not only is the order of titles reversed but it is a position of administration, authority and exaltation never His till now, based upon the work of the Cross. He was and is the Anointed—the Christ—Prophet, Priest and King. He ever was and is Jehovah—Lord—but now He is set "far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come, with all things placed under His feet." At His Name every knee is to bow and "every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the Glory of God the Father." (Eph. 1 : 21-22, Philp's 2 : 10-11.)

Joseph, the beloved son, sold, persecuted, imprisoned, "whose feet they hurt with fetters" is raised up by Pharaoh and *made Lord* of his house and *Ruler* of all his substance. (Psalm 105 : 17-21.) He becomes the dispenser of Pharaoh's provision—the very provision that Joseph had secured for him. It is through Joseph the hungry are fed both of his own kindred and the famishing crowds of Egypt.

He is the prototype of the man now exalted in heaven through whom, in virtue of His gloriously finished work, every blessing is so freely flowing from the heart and throne of God.

"Him as our Lord we gladly own,
To Him alone we now would live.
Who bowed our hearts before Thy throne
And gave us all that love could give,
Our willing voices cry aloud—
Worthy art Thou O Lamb of God."

Royal robes shall soon invest Thee,
Royal splendours crown Thy brow ;
Christ of God our souls confess Thee
King and Sovereign ever now :
Thee we reverence, Thee obey—
Own Thee Lord and Christ alway.

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To refuse Him His full place in the Godhead ; to deny His human perfectness or the place that righteousness has accorded Him in virtue of redemption is to be outside that divine fellowship, God calls His people into today. Reader are you in it ?

ITS BASIS.

“NEITHER be ye idolators as were some of them, as it is written the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.” “Wherefore my dearly beloved flee from idolatry.” I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say : 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. Behold Israel after the flesh : are not they which *eat* of the sacrifices *partakers* of the altar ? Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils ; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s Table and the table of devils. (1 Cor. 10 : 14, 17, 21).

In the early days of Christianity Corinth was a city of wealth, luxury and licentiousness ; the Church of God there was enriched with many endowments—their powers of oratory were great and they had intelligence far beyond the average, coming behind in no gift waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1 : 5, 6, 7). Nevertheless their state was one of carnality, sectarianism was conspicuous ; they had their chosen leaders “Paul, Apollos and Cephas ;” some, even, going the length of making “Christ” the head of a party.

Worldliness, too, was rampant, eating out the very vitals of their spiritual life. Idolatry was another snare, hence the exhortation “Neither be idolators as were some of them” V. 17 ; Israel’s history was intended to be a warning. “Fellowship” is the corrective for “divisions” in chapter 1 and stands in striking contrast to them. “Fellowship” is common-participation including all ; “divisions” are sectarian, narrow and confined to the special coterie and circle : Notwithstanding Israel’s idolatry they kept the

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feast of Jehovah, "they sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." (1 Cor. 10 : 7).

Corinth was in like danger—What then is the remedy ?
"Wherefore my dearly beloved flee from idolatry."

"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 ?" (1 Cor. 10 : 16).

The blood of the Cross is the basis of Christian fellowship ; there was no other way possible whereby people could be united together in common spiritual blessing. In it the glory of God is conserved. His claims of holiness and truth are maintained according to all the requirements of His infinite perfections and every need of the guilty conscience and aching heart satisfied in overflowing measure. God is glorified and we are redeemed. Christ's death secures both. The commemoration of that death—the Lord's supper—is the great rallying feast of the people of God. "The cup of blessing which we bless" is an expression of their common interest in all that it speaks of before the face of God. In eating the Lord's supper we are manifestly in association with His death. Just here we must differentiate between "the Lord's Table" and "the Lord's Supper." We eat the "Supper" and are *partakers* of the "Table" and whilst the Apostle distinguishes between them he clearly notes their close connection.

Eating the memorial feast connects us, by that very act, with His death of which it is a figure. Behind the symbols—the bread and wine—there is the reality of His death, the Lord's Table, with which we are henceforth identified. The Jew eating of his sacrifice became identified with the altar : "Are not they which eat of the sacrifices *partakers* of the altar ?" (1 Cor. 10 : 18). The heathen similarly in offering his incense to Jupiter, or any other idol, became a *partaker* of the "Table of demons," so that when the Lord's Supper is ended, and the feast is past, we have not left the "Table," though we have left the meeting for we are ever now in association with it. Israel carried the bones of Joseph all through the wilderness, the very Joseph who had previously saved them.

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It is the Christ who died in whose "fellowship" we are ; and as that mighty truth tells its own tale upon the heart and conscience it is impossible "to sit down to eat and drink and rise up to play" its realization delivers from spiritual idolatry—worldliness : To stop at the symbols—is the merest ritualism. This kind of dead formalism may be seen in unblushing display on the continent of Europe where sacramental religion parades arm in arm with the theatre and opera, separated only by an hour or two of the clock. But let it not be imagined, for a moment, that this gross inconsistency is confined to national religions with their crowds of professed worshippers, the same God-dishonoring principles may be practiced by those who not only profess faith in a crucified and risen Saviour but who loudly boast of being "gathered out" according to Apostolic precedent. The disciples of old "came together on the first day of the week (Acts 20 : 7) to break bread." In chapter 11 of our Epistle "coming together" is repeatedly alluded to as the privilege of the Assembly to eat "the Lord's Supper." That blessed feast rightly attracted the redeemed of the Lord. The "Lord's Table," however, is not something we "come to" or are "received at" or "set up" or are "gathered around" or "put away from." *With that* we are ever more in identification, as much during the other six days, as when on "the first day of the week" we assembled to remember the Lord and "shew His death till He come."

This searching fact puts the javelin of Phineas right through the whole body of worldliness (Num. 35 : 7, 8) and deals out the death sentence to the entire system of which the devil is the god and prince. We suggest that no one who has been to Gethsemane and Golgotha in their inner being during "the breaking of bread" could immediately afterwards indulge in loud or frivolous conversation or hilarious laughter ; the whole moral being recoils from such unseemly and irreverent conduct. It is not insinuated that this kind of behaviour is general or characteristic and yet alas ! the exception is far too often in evidence proving how little the heart has been wrought upon by the hallowed scenes, just engaged in. Let not these remarks be confounded with the warm brotherly greeting and hearty salutations of those who have been witnessing to the glorious

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fact that their fellowship and unity is in, and through, the death of Christ, "For we being many are one bread (loaf) and one body for we are all partakers of that one bread" (loaf).

In the light of that living and loving unity cold aloofness and a distant isolated mannerism are as much out of place on the one hand as fleshly levity is on the other.

The fellowship of the Son of God in chapter 1 and of His death in chapter 10 obliterates all parties and circles which are in their very conception a denial of the unity of that one body of which His death is the solid and eternal basis. Does the reader eat the Lord's Supper in the light of the Divine "fellowship" or as of some particular circle, ring, section or party?

ITS CHARACTER

"And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ."—1 John 1:3.

It has become a trite saying among men, "What is in a name?" It matters but little, comparatively, what a man's name is; but it is far otherwise connected with divine revelation, for there everything, in a certain sense, depends upon it.

The blessed God has been pleased to assume various titles in His dealings with men, each one in moral correspondence with the revelation He is giving of Himself.

Moses was the chosen leader to bring Israel out of the land of Egypt. He was a "proper child" when born; afterwards he was placed in the river (symbol of death) and raised up and sent to be Israel's Saviour. At first he was too hasty, and then too reluctant when the hour had struck for action. At the backside of the desert the message to him was, "Come now and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." (Ex. 3:10.) And Moses said unto God, "Behold when I come unto the children of Israel and shall say unto them, the God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, *what is His name?* what shall I say unto them?" The reply was "I AM THAT I AM," and He said, "Thus shalt

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thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. (V. 14.) Again we read (6 : 3) I appeared unto Abram, unto Isaac and unto Jacob by *the name of God Almighty*, but by name Jehovah I was not known to them. To the Patriarchs walking in splendid isolation from the idolatrous nations around them He was the "Almighty God," able to smite, or succour, with the arm of Omnipotence, on behalf of His lonely pilgrims.

Now that they have developed into a nation, and are leaving the land of their captivity and misery, He takes the covenant name of "Jehovah"—the self-existing I AM—faithful to all His promises, and sufficient for every emergency.

The inauguration of such a tremendous movement; emancipation from slavery, the destruction of the enemy, adopted as a special and peculiar people with their final triumph over every adverse power; called for a name compatible with such glorious and far-reaching consequences. As they stand, victorious, on the wilderness side of the Red Sea, celebrating their deliverance, they sing, "The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation; He is my God, and I will prepare Him a habitation, my fathers' God, and I will exalt Him; the Lord is a man of war: *the Lord (Jehovah) is His name.*" (Ex. 15 : 1.)

What a pity they did not continue as they had begun! From Pihahiroth to Sinai it is a story of grace from first to last; commencing with a dry pathway through the trackless waters; then Elim's shade and refreshment with its seventy palm trees and twelve wells of water; their murmurings too are stopped by bread rained from heaven, accompanied with water from the smitten rock; ending with the Gentile, Jethro, and the chosen people rejoicing together. (Ex. Chs. 15-18.)

At Sinai they place themselves under law, saying, "All that Jehovah commands us we will do." Alas! This was to their undoing. Scarcely had the law been written before its first command was broken and they were dancing before a golden calf. On the ground of responsibility and law all now was lost.

Moses, realizing this, broke the Tablets at the foot of the mount and thus averted Judgment and saved the

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situation. "Shew me *Thy glory*," was his bold request, at this critical juncture, and though the time had not come for the full answer, yet Jehovah would make all His goodness pass before Him, and let him see his back parts and proclaim *the name of Jehovah* before him as "The Lord God merciful and gracious and abundant in goodness and truth." (See 33 : 18 and 34 : 6.)

The very apostasy of the people was the occasion for discovering a spring in the heart of God never revealed before. And yet His face was not seen. This glimpse, however, of His glory, reflected in the face of Moses, was too bright for mortal eyes ; they could not look into it. This incident is referred to in 2 Cor. 3 : 7, by only by way of contrast, for wonderful as that passing panorama of grace and law was, it fades into utter oblivion in the presence of the unclouded revelation shining in the face of the glorified man at God's right hand. *Everything is out now !*

Some fifteen centuries after, there came a greater crisis in the history of Israel than the one we have been considering. Their Messiah and King had been presented to them with every divine credential and *had been rejected*. Matthew's first eleven chapters detail the history of it. Let us briefly review them. Ch. 1, the genealogy of the King. Ch. 2, the question of the Magi, "Where is He that is born, King of the Jews ?" and though Jerusalem heartlessly ignored Him, they fell down and worshipped. Ch. 3, His forerunner announces the Kingdom and the King. Ch. 4, The enemy's offer of a world-kingdom is refused, and he has to retreat, baffled and defeated. Chs. 5, 6, 7, The spirit and principles of the Kingdom. Chs. 8 and 9, its "powers"—demons, death and disease flee before Him ; winds and waves obey His voice.

Here is the summary. Ch. 9 : 35, "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages *teaching* in their synagogues, and *preaching* the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and disease *among the people*. Ch. 10, "The twelve" now receive their commission to the harvest fields with the testimony limited to "the lost sheep of the *house of Israel*." The Samaritans too are excluded. Ch. 11 brings things to a climax. Even John the Baptist's faith is tottering, and he inquires, "Art Thou He that should come,

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or do we look for another?" Another what? Another Messiah, of course. The cities too, wherein most of His mighty works had been done come under the "woe" of His Judgment, for they had not repented. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! And thou Capernaum which art exalted to heaven shall be brought down to Hell."

Though historically the probation period would be extended, virtually it was at an end now. "The heir" had come, and they would "kill Him." But is the disaster absolute and complete? No! blessed be God, for it is just here, at the end of human extremity, that the glory of God breaks out in a revelation far exceeding anything in the past. "AT THAT TIME, Jesus answered" (ch.11:25). Mark the moment,—"*At that time*"—for it is the moment of an unparalleled crisis, and observe the "answer"—His answer to His people's refusal of Him. The Spirit of God had long since in Isaiah predicted it. He had spent His strength for naught and in vain. "And though *Israel be not gathered* yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord and my God shall be my strength." (Is. 49:3-6.)

The blessed One, though feeling in the depths of His devoted heart this treatment of "His own," falls back on the Father's far-reaching counsels and even thanks Him that He had "hid these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes." (Matt. 11:25.) As you read verse 27 you can imagine you are reading John's gospel. It is his language, but now adopted by Matthew—led of the Spirit—"No man knoweth *the Son but the Father*, neither *knoweth any man the Father save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.*"

Here then the prayer of Moses, "Shew me Thy glory," finds its full answer. This is Christianity. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son Who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Let the reader remark that John 1:10, 11, 12, condenses Matthew's eleven chapters into three verses.

The revelation of the Father in the Son is the great truth of this time of surpassing privilege. The name of Father occurs 120 times in the fourth gospel alone. Eternal life

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is found in the knowledge of it. It is characteristic of our day—God revealed and known as Father. The Father's name: His bosom—His house—His glory—His love—Himself. Not the "Almighty" or "Jehovah" or "Lord God merciful and gracious" or even "Most High;" precious as all these are in their own time and place; but *that name of closest intimacy* and relationship declared by the Son when on earth and still more fully in resurrection when in those glowing terms He said, "I ascend to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God" (John 20 : 17), lifting them into a region even beyond the prayer of "Our Father which art in Heaven." As we listen to that profound outpouring of heart beneath the shadows of the cross (John 17) we hear, "Father, the hour is come." "And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self." "Holy Father, keep through Thine own Name"—"Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me to be with me where I am;" "O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee;" concluding with "I have declared unto them *Thy name*, and *will declare it*, that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them." There could be no flaw in the revelation but as yet the eyes of His followers had not seen nor their hearts taken it in. At the close of His ministry Philip asks to see the Father, and that would *suffice* them. His almost last word was, "I came forth from *the Father* and am come into the world; again I leave the world and go to the Father." "By this," said they, "we believe *Thou camest forth from God*." Let not the reader think that this is a mere coincidence and of little moment, or that it is simply a question of words. On the contrary, the Omniscient Lord, knowing they had not apprehended the truth *as to the Father*, replied, "Do ye now believe?" The hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be *scattered* every man to his own and shall leave me alone, and yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me." (John 16 : 32.)

It is *the Father* who holds the family together. He is the bond of its unity and the very centre of its constitution. The truth of it known in their hearts would have kept the timid, fleeing company *together* instead of being scattered "*every man to his own*." And this principle remains unchanged

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today as much as ever and becomes a tremendous plea for the recognized unity of the family of God.

But the truth is there was the imperative need of the very thing that He had been so persistently bringing before them in those closing hours, and that was *The Coming of the Comforter*. He would teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance whatsoever Christ had said to them. "In that day (when the Spirit came) ye shall know that I am in my Father and ye in Me and I in you." (John 14 : 20.) He is the source of all spiritual power and intelligence for "The things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God." "He searches all things, yea, the deep things of God." In John 14, 15 and 16 He has a threefold ministry. In Ch. 14 He unfolds and brings to remembrance the teaching and words of the Lord when on earth. In Ch. 15 He testifies of Him now *glorified*—the present, and in Ch. 16 he shows them *things to come*. It was thus expedient for them that He should go away. The Spirit is here today crying in our hearts, "Abba Father," giving us the blessed consciousness of sonship and all the privileges of redemption's work. (Gal. 4 : 4.)

A young lawyer just beginning practice sat in his office awaiting clients. One appeared telling him that a man had borrowed money from him but now repudiated the debt. "The ink on which he wrote the promise to pay has evaporated and I have nothing but a blank piece of paper." The lawyer's knowledge of chemistry produced a solution which brought the writing, buried in the paper, to the surface again, and his client won his case.

The coming of the Comforter—the Spirit of God—was the great necessity to turn timid and ignorant men into a holy band of courageous, undaunted, illuminated, intelligent, devoted witnesses.

"These things understood not His disciples at first ; but when *Jesus was glorified*, then remembered they that these things were written of Him and that they had done these things unto Him." (John 12 : 16.) "And whilst *truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son*

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Jesus Christ," we need the unhindered ministry of the Spirit to unfold its blessedness that our joy may be full.

" *Blest Father Infinite in Grace,
Source of Eternal Joy;
Thou leadst our hearts to that blest place
Where rest's without alloy.*"

ITS QUALIFICATION—"LIFE"

"That (the life) which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that ye also may have fellowship with us."—1 John 1 : 3.

"Life" which is the qualification for "fellowship" cannot be produced by man, though it can be imitated. It was here where the magicians of Egypt utterly failed and had to exclaim in their defeat, "This is the finger of God." They could imitate Aaron in casting down their rods, turning them into serpents, but when life is produced from dust, and there was evidence of a "creative power," Egyptian mimicry is exposed and baffled. *Life is the test* between spurious and genuine Christianity, between "the finger of God" and the hand of man. Profession can go a long way in the religious regime. Balaam was eloquent and offered sacrifices, Esau wept, Saul was among the prophets, Judas preached, carried the philanthropic bag, cast out demons and healed diseases, "Jannes and Jambres" withstood Moses, but they shall proceed no further. Why? *What* stopped them? The answer is: *Life!*

Even naturally that subject has found so far no satisfactory explanation. Creation has been ransacked for a definition, but thus far the oracle has been unable to explain. And if in the physical world there comes no answer, in the spiritual realm man is, if anything, further astray than ever. Divine revelation is the only resource to which we must turn to ascertain its meaning. The following extract is from a pamphlet of the writer's published a few years since.

"It is a matter of common knowledge that no one has been able to formulate, either in ancient or modern times, a definition of life. Sages and scientists, pundits and philosophers are at their wits end here; the wisest and most profound are utterly at a loss to explain it. When

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some have triumphantly imagined they have discovered the source, or the constituent parts, of even animal life, the triumph has been short lived, and the funeral soon followed. What *life is* depends upon the way in which we contemplate it. We speak of it as a vital spark, the living energy, the dynamic force, the power *by which we live*—potential life. Then there is *the life we live*, our ways, conduct, behaviour, moral or immoral, miserable or happy—our practical, or “manner of life.” The first comes vividly before us, as we witness the decay of natural powers, and watch beside the dying bed and whisper—“he lives.” To our surprise he survives and his conduct, henceforth, is of the worst type, and we remark, “Look at the way he lives”—this is practical life. There is also an order of things *in which we live*; our surroundings, occupations, conditions, such as country life, city life, commercial life, English or American life; this is objective, and I enquire if you prefer farm life to town life. Then again, I am about to marry, or commence business, and this is “starting in life,” which carries with it a new state of being, new moral conditions, relationships, affections, joys and responsibilities. These various aspects have their foundation in scripture, and their counterpart in the spiritual realm.

Essentially life was in the Son, as with the Father, from all eternity. By essentially, I mean that all the elements of which it is composed existed in Him in those timeless ages past. When he took flesh and blood the life was *manifested* before the adoring eyes of those who “heard, saw, and handled of the Word of Life.” What a life it was of dependence, joy, devotion, and faithfulness, with its fathomless depths of communion and love! To make this life possible to us “He came by water and blood,” and then having taken His place on high, the Spirit came to join His testimony to that of water and blood—the death of Christ—and these three, the Spirit, water and blood, agree in one in witnessing to the fact that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. (1 John 5:6-11.) The Spirit’s presence here is the proof of, and in answer to, a glorified Christ. Thus glorified, He is the full expression of what eternal life is, for He is in the state and place to which life properly belongs. Thus we see it in the past in

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its outgoings with the Father ; then on earth in humiliation beheld by the Apostles, and finally in its full display in the glory of God.

Eternal life *in Him* in no wise denies its being in us ; the former tells us of its infinite fulness—the boundless ocean ; He has “life in Himself,” and is the source of it for others ; they derive it from Him. The water is the same whether in the faucet or the reservoir ; the stream flows from the fountain, and they are neither separated nor confounded ; the living water springs up in the believer into everlasting life.

The last Adam—the risen Head of the heavenly race—stands in their midst, and breathes His life into them, saying, “receive ye Holy Spirit.” This is “the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” that makes us “free from the law of sin and death ;” it is the Spirit viewed as “life,” not as at Pentecost, forming Christ’s body, but as the “Spirit of Christ” which makes us “of Him—of His race.”

This is the life that carries with it power, joy and victory ; its very law is one of liberty, as demonstrated in the risen Lord coming out of the tomb without any of the relics of death upon Him. No grave clothes are here, it has not to be said in His case, as of Lazarus, “loose Him and let Him go,” for His resurrection was the manifested triumph over all the powers of darkness. The trappings of death are all folded up and wrapped together, apart by themselves in the silent tomb, in token that the Master of death had been there doing as He pleased, “making a shew of them openly triumphing over them in it.” This sets forth the “abundant life” of which He had spoken (John 10 : 10). Life in resurrection and in the Spirit’s power, in which all believers now share, yet possessed by none heretofore. It not only proclaims freedom from flesh, sin and law, the world and Satan, but *qualifies* for the “fellowship” whereby the “joy” of the saint is “full.”

Is this your experience, my reader ?

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ITS SPHERE—LIGHT

“This then is the message that we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.”—1 John 1 : 5.

“But if we walk in the light as He (God) is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin”—1 John 1 : 7

All that God is in the fullness of His revelation to man, has come to light in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is therefore a fatal delusion to imagine that any of the numerous modern cults have received communications and revelations from Heaven.

The last word has been spoken. There had been “the sundry times” and “the divers manners” in which God had spoken previously by the prophets; creation, too, with its material wonders of stars and oceans and mountains; its light and darkness, atmosphere and seasons, were all living witnesses of omnipotent power and goodness. Sinai also, with its thunders and lightnings and earthquakes causing hearts to quake whilst Jehovah uttered His fiery law: all these there had been, but till He came Who is “over all God blessed forever”—“God manifest in the flesh” we were utterly in the dark as to the nature and moral attributes of the blessed God.

The past centuries had been “the time of this ignorance which “God winked at,” for “no man had seen Him at any time,” but now “the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father He hath declared Him.” None but One who is Himself God could reveal God. How could One who was divested of the qualities or attributes proper to Deity be the Expression of Deity? Limitations anywhere would mean failure. But we are assured in the most emphatic and positive language that in the incarnate Christ “all the fullness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell.” (Cols. 1 : 19.) Nothing was abbreviated, nothing curtailed. Every intelligent Christian admits that our Lord, during the days of His flesh, may have suspended, or held in check, the operation of certain attributes according to the good pleasure of the Eternal Three-in-One, but they were all resident in Him whether passive or active. He turned water into wine

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upon one occasion and refused to turn stones into bread on another, but in both He acted in concert with the Divine mind and will.

The "message which we have heard of Him" is "that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." This statement immediately follows the assertion that "our fellowship is with *the Father*"—that name so full of grace, and of the sweetest and closest relationship. Thus the majesty of the Infinitely Holy One is maintained consistently with the music and dancing of the Father's house, for "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." We must distinguish in the verses following between WHAT God is and WHERE He is. The former tells of His unchangeable nature in which there is no variableness neither shadow of turning; the latter speaks of the unclouded revelation that redemption has placed Him in. He is no longer in thick darkness or hidden behind the veil. He is "in the light" that all may see and know Him. Through the mighty work wrought at Calvary His own hands rent the veil from top to bottom. That work did not change an iota of His being; but it *revealed Him*. This is what light does. "Whatsoever doth make manifest is light." There is an unsullied pathway opened now from the realm of darkness into Eternal day; God has *come out* in every way consistent with His Glory, and the redeemed pass into the holiest to worship "in spirit and in truth."

It is quite customary in the Apostle John's writings to speak of things normally, as they subsist under the eye of God; in other words, from the divine side of the subject. It is especially so in the scripture under consideration. Nor is there anything more elevating, inspiriting, or searching, than taking account of ourselves according to the light of the sanctuary. The twelve loaves—symbol of Israel's national unity—standing on the golden table in the light of the golden candlestick, typify the children of God "in the light" having "fellowship one with another" and cleansed from every sin. "God is in the light" and so are His people. *He is revealed and they know Him*. The "if" does not raise the question of character or conduct, but of conversion and cleansing. It is not *how* we walk, but *where*. The believer is not in darkness and therefore

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does not walk in it. "God who commanded light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. 4 : 6.) This is the striking antithesis to the episode in Exodus when one of the greatest of men asked to see Jehovah's glory, and was told that no man could see Him and live. Death was the penalty of all who presumed to look upon His face. His back parts alone could be seen and that only for a passing moment, and even for that moment he must be covered by Jehovah's hand, and hidden in the cleft of the rock. (Ex. 33 : 18 : 23.) God with His face turned away was all the mighty lawgiver was permitted to behold. Christianity, the outshining of God in infinite grace, with righteousness maintained according to all the requirements of absolute holiness, is now seen in the face of The Man glorified in the highest heavens. In Him every ray of the divine glory is centered and shines forth. Its radiancy penetrated the soul of Saul of Tarsus, the fiercest of persecutors, turning him into Paul, the foremost of the Apostles. The visible, physical light that reached him on the Damascus road was but a figure of that spiritual revelation that lit up his whole being with the truth that Jesus the despised Nazarene was the Son of God. Blind in body he was for three days, but his inner man was forever illumined by that light which is above the sun's brightness, causing him to press on with ever increasing devotion and whole-hearted purpose till the goal was reached and the prize was won. There fix your steadfast gaze, my reader, for you need it in these days of "damnable heresies," deadly delusions, religious sensations, spurious faith-healing, money-making propaganda !

"Life" as we have already seen, is the qualification, not growth nor intelligence, for this fellowship" and is therefore the inalienable right of all the blood-redeemed, spirit-sealed saints of God.

Truly our fellowship is—not should or ought to be—with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. This is the subjective side—what is true *in us* ; whilst "*Light*" is that new order of things—a spiritual realm outside the region of darkness wherein God is revealed and known

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through the redemption-work of His beloved Son, and in which every believer "*walks,*" though he may have a great deal to learn of all the wonders connected with that revelation !

"Sin and death no more shall reign !
Jesus died and lives again,
In the glory's highest height,
See Him God's supreme delight.

Oh, the glory of the grace,
Shining in the Saviour's face
Telling sinners from above
God is light and God is love."

"WE HAVE FELLOWSHIP ONE WITH ANOTHER"

1 John 1 : 7.

Its Scope and Circle.

Passing, not so very long since, through the heart of the city of London, the writer was suddenly accosted by an old friend who, in the course of conversation, remarked, "We are very sorry to have lost you Mr. M——" I inquired, "in what vital or real sense have you lost me?" After some little hesitation the reply came, "Well, no, we haven't in any vital sense." Whilst there was a chilliness of manner, there was no discourtesy, during the brief interview. The speakers had, in days past, been on intimate terms as believers, in, and servants of, a Common Lord, but now, for nearly twenty years, not only had intimacy ceased, but all ordinary intercourse as well. Something had happened, thousands of miles away, which "something" had in no way affected any fundamental truth that bound us together. The sting, and crux, of the brief sentence alluded to, is in the opening word "we." Analyze it—quietly and impartially—do not try to squeeze out of it any artificial meaning. There is really no need, for it carries on its surface, its own interpretation. It refers to Christians whose fellowship consists of an affiliated number of meetings in various parts of the world, and formed into a corporation, with practically no connection with other children of God. That, dear reader, is the mighty "we" our brother referred to. If you have ever been, within the radius of that circle, and are no longer there, no matter how ignominiously, or

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unrighteously, you have been expelled, you are viewed and treated as unfit for recognition, in any proper Christian sense, and are "no longer in fellowship." There are hundreds living who will sorrowfully bear witness to the truth of this indictment ; it is one of the saddest spectacles that disgraces the House of God today and the pity—the supreme pity of it is—that this propaganda is carried out under the plea that "God wills it." The very constitution of such a "fellowship" is sectarian to the core, and has been the cause of heart-breaking grief among the people of God and of deep dishonour to the One who died" to gather together *in one* the children of God who were scattered abroad." (John 11 : 52.)

Fellowship according to the divine idea is not one of meetings but of "one with another"—saints with saints—not meetings with meetings. The Holy Spirit has baptized each believer into the unity of the body of Christ, "whether he be Jew or Gentile, bond or free, and has made them all to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12 : 13). Scripture knows nothing of a unity of assemblies, but knows everything of the unity of the members of Christ's body. There are *not two* spiritual corporations contemplated in the Word, one being the living organism of that mystic body composed of all believers, quickened, redeemed and sealed—and another, the miniature imitation of it composed of an affiliated circle of meetings, bound together by an ecclesiastical cordon. The former is united to its Living Head in glory and to all who are His below, and they united to each other in the eternal bond and power of the Spirit of God ; for we are not only members of His body, but also members one of another (Eph. 5 : 30 ; Rom. 12 : 5). Membership of a meeting, or of a consolidated number of them, is foreign both in language and in fact to divine revelation.

There is no desire to make undue capital out of a mere term, or to make a man "an offender for a word." Had a local gathering of saints been intended by the "we" no special objection could have been taken ; but that is precisely what was not meant. No ; it is not the "we" of a few of the Lord's people assembling together but the "we" of a self-constituted corporation embracing those only

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within its own special jurisdiction. This humanly constructed instrument has expelled scores of meetings, with multitudes of its former adherents over whom it had no more administrative authority than Ephesus had over Sardis, or Smyrna over Thyatira. Such is the force of this ecclesiastical weapon that it has become possible to excommunicate some of the saintliest of men, the devoted servants of our Lord : Men, too, of unquestioned gift and ability conspicuous for Christ-likeness and of untiring energy in His service. "No matter," says this perverted use of power "the principle of the unity of the body" must be maintained and all must submit or be discarded and treated henceforth as unfit for Christian communion ; in fact, relegated to the place of the unclean and unbelieving. And this, Christian reader, claims to be "discipline in the House of God."

This wholesale expulsion of saints and honored servants of Christ is the necessary result of the "circle fellowship." Its fruit is consistent with its root ; neither of which have any foundation in Scripture. Each local assembly derives all its blessings, and authority from the fact that "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. 18 : 20.) Any assembly presuming to control, or adjudicate in the affairs of another, is setting authority against authority, which can only end in disaster, besides being an unwarrantable intrusion into that realm where the Lord Jesus Christ alone is the Administrator. "Where are you now?" inquired a brother of repute as he entered the apartment of the train in which the writer was travelling : I replied "with the Lord's people." This I knew would not satisfy my interrogator and again the query was repeated. "No, but *where* are you?"

My reply was to repeat the previous statement reminding him that those he was "with" had cast out some whose shoes neither of us were worthy to dust and naming one such whose praise was in all the assemblies ! The formula adopted in the dismissal from this favored circle as "being no longer in fellowship" or "put away from amongst us" are probably superseded by others of a more generous tone such as "the want of affinity," or "unable to walk

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any longer with them." But this is only dust thrown in the eyes to escape the onus and severity of the earlier, but more honest formula ; the change is only in the label, the prescription is the same, resulting in the victim or victims being "outside" no longer to be recognized as of the family of God. Comparatively recently a letter was received from one (converted through the instrumentality of his correspondent) saying how grieved he had been to pass him in the street without recognition. This kind of treatment meted out to large numbers of the redeemed of the Lord, whilst arousing feelings of indignation, and strong resentment, should also bring the blush to the cheek, and tear to the eye, and put us flat on our faces, before God in humiliation, all round. After this somewhat lengthy digression, we return with deepened confidence to the Spirit's assertion that "we have *fellowship one with another* ;" this includes all the family of God ; it is a part of the three-fold blessing set forth in the verse at the head of this article. "In the light," "Fellowship one with another," and "Cleansed from all sin."

This is normal Christianity and the portion consequently, of all who believe the glad tidings. It has been proposed that those known as "exclusive brethren" should remove the barriers which the unholy and uncalled for divisions of the past have created and unite together in "one common fellowship." This desire for unity is surely of God, for it is both "good and pleasant" that brethren should thus "dwell together." But the amalgamation of *all* the various parties of so-called "brethren" would only be an enlargement of a sect, the very thing now happening among some of the denominations, with apparently little or no concern for the truth, without which no unity, great or small, is worth contending for. The divine instinct for unity has been anticipated, and provided for, in that, which the Spirit *has already formed*, comprising every true believer on earth. Faith both accepts, and acts upon it, in receiving them and so "endeavours to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace ;" but this we repeat is not a unity of assemblies; but of the members of Christ. "Amalgamation" is a human device for the extension of a party. The reception of all those eligible, in virtue of having life

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in Christ, leaps over all sectarian boundaries and heartily welcomes all who are His. This is neither "looseness" or "independency" but a largeness insisted upon by the only authority entitled to speak. It is not only safe, but divine in its very simplicity. Those who will carry it out need fear no bogey epithets such as "loose" or "independent," or any others that hostile criticism may invent. Is it "loose" to welcome those whom Christ has received? Who are the "independents?" The rejectors of the flock and family of God, or those who receive them?

Let not the reader imagine for a moment that there is the remotest intention, in what has been said, of isolating the local assembly from intercommunion with other assemblies sound in the faith of Christ. On the contrary, we should cultivate in every possible way, consistent with truth, worship and ministry with those meeting elsewhere. In the early days before the advent of schisms and divisions all believers were together; they were the Church of God in the various cities and localities in which they lived, associated, and labored. Now it is, as to outward form, all broken to pieces as was Paul's ship, in which he was a prisoner. Outward unity has long since disappeared though the Church, the living company of believers, subsists as ever, in one unbroken organic whole under the eye of God. It is not within the power of earth or hell to "prevail" against that spiritual structure which Christ builds, or that body of which He is Head, formed and maintained in the immutable unity of the Holy Spirit. Whilst insisting upon each meeting maintaining its own individual responsibility, there should be the earnest endeavor to cultivate all practical fellowship with those whose purpose it is to honor the Lord and His precious Word; there are times, too, when they should unite their forces and march in a solid phalanx of testimony in sounding out the gospel or publishing some outstanding fundamental truths in the face of a fast apostatizing Christendom.

Our heartiest sympathies are with those who have suffered at the hands of a ruthless majority and have been "cast out" to be henceforth treated as "spiritual outlaws;" the astounding fact, however, remains so full too, of the

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bitterest irony, that those thus sinned against have, in their turn, instituted the same kind of proceedings against thousands of their fellow-saints, brethren beloved in the Lord, by refusing them participation in the Supper of the Lord; the one place above all others where the unity of the body of Christ is set forth. "For we being many are one bread, one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread." The folly of basing this "exclusivism" upon what happened some eight decades since, should be apparent at this stage to every exercised mind. Are we heirs to a religious estate; some to tares and weeds and others to golden grain? The delusion of this supposed "heritage" is the result of the circle-fellowship. It is not a question of three quarters of a century ago, but of the present moment. In almost every Scripture where the body of Christ is mentioned it is viewed as a *living, complete entity now on earth*. "There is one body" (Eph. 4 : 4) "From whom *the whole* body fitly joined together" (Eph. 4 : 16). "And not holding the Head from which *all* the body" (Col. 2 : 19). What then is my attitude towards it today? An "hereditary religion" is a snare of the enemy to keep God's people apart; to hark back to the doings of the past, by those long since gone to their account, and making their differences a cause of division, is to deny our present and immediate responsibility to the Church, Christ's body, as it exists today. Shall we continue the evils of factions necessitated by the circle-fellowships created before we were born?

The day of Pentecost in fulfillment of the Lord's last message to the disciples, was the day of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit "For John truly baptized with water" said He, "but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." On this memorable day, too, the Church was born in her threefold character as Christ's "Body and Bride" and God's "Building." The "Body" tells of *union* with a glorified Man at the right hand of God, which as His "*Bride*" satisfies His *heart*, whereas the "Building" is variously designated "Habitation," "Temple" and "House," and sets forth the wisdom, holiness and government of God as well as the immensity of the privileges of those composing it.

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“For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one Body whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free.” “Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it.” “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall be joined unto his wife.” “This is a great mystery but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.” “In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.” “That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God.” Israel in the hour of their triumph, and deliverance, not only sung that “the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea” but added “Thou hast *led forth* the people which thou hast redeemed. Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy *holy habitation*” (Ex. 15 : 13).

How tremendous is the loss when Christians get no further, in the grand scheme of redemption, than their own personal deliverance from sin, death and judgment, and thus miss the great purpose that God has in view in their deliverance—that He may dwell among them! To be satisfied in knowing that :

“There is no condemnation ; there is no hell for me.” And that “The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation” is to fall immensely short of the Divine purpose.

We are no longer in the days of types and shadows, however striking and vivid. The tabernacle with the “cloudy pillar by day and pillar of fire by night,” has given place to an actual house of God, on earth composed of “living stones,” and, in which He perpetually dwells. The first intimation of it was when the Divine Architect said “Thou shalt be called Cephias, which is by interpretation, a stone” (John 1 : 42), and afterwards confirmed it at Cessarea Phillipi with the promise that “on this Rock I will build my Church.” Pentecost was the fulfilment of these predictions and though the glory of those early days has passed, the indestructible building abides today in all its unique, divine, and heavenly character! We are not

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now speaking of nominal, professing Christianity, permeated with false doctrine and steeped to its neck in worldliness ; but of that living structure built by "The Son of the living God," and over which He is both Administrator and Great High Priest (Hebs. 3 and 10).

The reader may be enquiring, "Yes, but what has all this to do with "fellowship one with another." The answer is "everything." The Assembly at Corinth was the *local expression* of the threefold relationship of "Building, Body and Bride" to which we have referred. It is significant that it is the only company of Christians whom the Apostle addresses as "The Church of God." In Ch. 3 : 9-16 they are God's "Building" and "Temple" respectively, and in 12 : 27 "Christ's body" whilst in the second epistle 11 : 2, they are "espoused to one husband" to be presented "as a chaste virgin to Christ." It has often been observed that the omission of the definite article plainly indicates that Corinth could not be the *whole* "Body" or "Temple" *that* would necessarily require *all* the people of God *everywhere*, yet this twofold privilege and responsibility was theirs, as being representative of the whole ! Let it be clearly and distinctively understood that no meeting can claim to be *the* Assembly of the city, or town or neighbourhood in which it is located ; but it may truly and without presumption assume such a privilege in the particular place in which it assembles ; as for instance in Pilgrim Hall, Celestial Road, Fairhaven.

Every meeting scripturally constituted is expressive of "The Body" of Christ in gladly welcoming all the members of that organism ; whilst as "Temple" it maintains order, discipline and holiness suited to the Divine Presence. To reject any of the members of the former or to knowingly permit Evil in doctrine or practice compromises its standing and forfeits it eventually. No one should be "received" upon his own solitary testimony ; "The testimony of *two* men is true." "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established." But it may be asked, "Is not the testimony of one man true ?" "No." Not for the purpose of reception among the people of God.

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There may arise at times certain special and exceptional cases in which it is quite evident to the discerning eye that the one wishing to "communicate" is eligible and should be "received," yet as a Divine principle there must be the corroborative testimony either by voice or by letter! "If I bear witness of myself my witness is not true," said the lips of incarnate truth and purity. Even He, in order to be "received" as Israel's Messiah must be accredited by other voices besides His own. He immediately adduces five, "His works," "The Father," "John the Baptist," "Moses" and "The Scriptures." It is both loose and immoral to "receive" without competent testimony; the applicant himself and, at least, another.

At a large and representative conference in London some twenty years ago it was alleged that one circle of "Brethren" charged another circle with "receiving" Christians to the Lord's Supper upon their own unsupported witness: "One may have been 'put away' " it was said "in Liverpool for drunkenness and he is received in London." This charge was at once repudiated in a storm of loud protests! It is rebellion against Christ who is "Son over God's House," to reject scriptural discipline. A flagrant case happened recently in which if the meeting had not acted, would have been treason against the true Person of the Son of God, and yet, as is often the case, there are critics, apologists, and sympathizers whose objections are on a par with the woman who blames the firemen for using so much water in extinguishing the flames when saving her child. Ultimately it will be found that the firemen know more about water than their ungrateful critic!

It is impossible to avoid the subject of discipline when treating for "reception" for it forms an integral part of that vexed and difficult question. What has added to the confusion has been the misapplication of the various relationships in which the Assembly stands to Christ.

As "The Body" it is not an object of discipline and chastisement, but rather of care, sympathy, and nourishment—"which is the Head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual

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working in the measure of every part maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Ephs. 4).

"And not holding the Head from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered and knit together increaseth with the increase of God" (Cols. 2 : 19). You do not *smite* your finger when nipping it in the door, but automatically place it in your mouth for succour and comfort.

The "House of God" presents a different aspect being the sphere of His moral government. In it "judgment begins" and His wisdom, order, discipline and all sufficiency are set forth. The administration of it is in the hands of "The Son" who abides forever (John 8 : 35 ; Hebs. 3 : 3-6, 10 : 21).

Those whom He makes free are free indeed, and eligible for every spiritual function whether of worship or service. This is the death blow on the one hand to clericalism, with its humanly appointed authority, or to the wilfulness of unbridled flesh, that recognizes no authority but its own. Had the divine intention been realized, instead of the terrible disorder and failure seen everywhere, the unbelieving world would have beheld, in wonderment, the beauty, order, supply, dependence, and perfect submission to the One Great mind that regulates everything as did the Queen of Sheba when she saw it demonstrated in Solomon's day, and returned to her native land to bear witness of his glory, saying "The half had not been told." (I Kings 10 : 4-8).

All the people of God are His dwelling place, ever and always, wherever they may be, for they are themselves "the habitation." This is "the house of God" as it exists "de facto." Do not confound it with the house *in function* as when the people of God assemble together for worship, prayer or ministry. A member of Parliament in Great Britain or Canada, or of the House of Representatives in the United States, is always such in virtue of his election, whether he is at home or in London, Ottawa, or Washington ; but he is not always "gathered together" with other members of the legislature creating laws or discussing national questions.

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It is incumbent that Christians always behave themselves becomingly in "The house of God, which is the Church of the living God," as those who form an inseparable part of that august and privileged company.

ITS AUTHORITY.—APOSTOLIC.

"And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers."
Acts 2 : 42.

It is evident from the above quotation that the Apostles had a bond of association all their own, outside, and apart from, all mere human institutions whether sacred or profane. It was *their* "fellowship;" they were the instruments of its formation as they were its constituent parts, a heavenly company bound together by a common object. Christ had attracted them to Himself; they were His followers; with Him they walked; at His feet they sat and learned; in His company they were nourished and fed those three and a half eventful years. Whatever their failures (and they were but men after all), it is beyond all question that He had won their hearts, and drawn them out of their natural, national, and religious associations to Himself. They received and confessed Him as "Israel's Messiah" and "the Son of the living God."

The thought of His leaving them eventually broke them all up, for He was their all. True, the time would come, when He was risen and glorified, that their vision would be clarified, and their faith and courage be immensely stronger—strong enough to resist, and overcome, the fanatical fury of both Pagan and Jewish opposition, enabling them to march triumphantly to a martyr's death in almost if not actually every instance! The great burden of their teaching was that Jesus who had been crucified on earth, had been "made both Lord and Christ" in Heaven (Acts 2 : 36).

Administration, authority, and supremacy are His. Everything is vested now in the glorified though rejected Man. "Made Lord" to bestow, as the Dispenser of the riches of the grace of God, what His redemption toils had won. Some ninety times in the Acts is "Lord" mentioned.

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The Spirit, whose abiding presence on earth as the great characteristic blessing of our time is the mighty Agent of His administration, and permeates this historic Book throughout, being referred to some fifty times. The Apostles have passed off the scene, but their inspired writings continue with us today, which as the Word of God "liveth and abideth forever."

From these we learn the nature and character of their fellowship, and our responsibility to continue in it.

The most superficial glance will prove what a tremendous change has taken place between the first century and the twentieth. In very early days the cleavage began which has but deepened and increased as the centuries have rolled along, till today we are at the edge of an impassable gulf between Apostolic procedure and teaching and the full-blown apostacy of a corrupted Christianity. Their doctrine on which their fellowship is based, included the Godhead of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit: Christ's virgin birth as the long-promised "*seed of the woman*;" His peerless life of devotion, dependence, and obedience Godwards, with its tenderness, compassion, goodness, and mercy manwards, in a sin-diseased Satan-ruled world; ending at last in His drinking the bitter cup of divine judgment on Golgotha's tree, that God might freely offer salvation, pardon, peace, and eternal glory to all the guilty sons and daughters of Adam's race. Then followed His triumphant resurrection, and His present place in glory as Advocate and Priest till He returns to take the redeemed to the "Father's House," afterwards coming with them to establish His throne in Zion and commence His universal reign. This is but a brief and faint echo of the clarion note of Apostolic teaching: theirs was no hesitating or half-hearted testimony to appease a skeptical generation—Stephen, Barnabas, Peter, Silas, and Paul and all the other speakers and writers of Apostolic days march together in a solid phalanx of unity as witnesses to these things.

The Apostles too, were desirous that others should participate with them, saying, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have *fellowship with us*, and truly *our fellowship* is with the Father

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and with His Son Jesus Christ, and these things write we unto you that your joy may be full." There is no difference really between this fellowship and that alluded to in 1 Cor. 1 : 9. "The fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." It is simply viewed from another angle.

Notwithstanding the general departure from the original proposition, as set forth in the beginning of the dispensation, God has had, all along, His faithful servants who have "not defiled their garments" with the pollution around them : how brightly will such shine in the fast-approaching day of manifestation when "the fire will try every man's work of *what sort it is.*" The fearless Wycliffe, termed "the morning star of the Reformation," Huss of Bohemia, Farel and Calvin, and conspicuously Martin Luther, along with hosts of others, whose names, unknown to us, were used of God to unearth the ecclesiastical rubbish of the past, finding their way through it all to the Rock of Ages as the alone foundation for their justification and peace with God—later on, in the eighteenth century came the mighty evangelistic movement through the beloved Whitefield, the Wesleys, and their contemporaries, which, spreading throughout the British Isles and over to America, swept tens of thousands into the Kingdom of God. It is almost exactly a hundred years since, as we write, that the Spirit of God stirred up in different parts, notably in Ireland and the West of England, a number of earnest, intelligent, godly men to "search the Scriptures" not only with reference to their own personal acceptance in Christ, but also to ascertain the mind of the Lord with regard to the assembling, worship, and ministry of His people. Apart from prejudice, nor as propaganda of opposition to the prevailing organized "ministry" in the "Churches" did these earnest enquirers read their Bibles from day to day, both publicly and privately. Gradually a flood of divine light came. Dispensational and prophetic truth with much more besides opened up to them, making the written Word, as a whole, speak with a force and clearness unknown for long centuries.

They discovered, according to Apostolic teaching, that if the ascended Lord had bestowed spiritual gifts upon any, whether he were scholarly or illiterate, whether he

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were a lawyer, bricklayer, storekeeper, carpenter, miner, or whatever his earthly calling, he needed no other endowment or confirmation for the exercise of those gifts. He was also qualified as one of the "holy priesthood" to officiate in the service of the sanctuary, and to offer the sacrifice of praise. This was not a human revolution upsetting divine order; but rather divine order setting aside human tradition, and the usurpation by a special class of that which is the common privilege of all the "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." That little company of Christians assembling in Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin, a hundred years ago, for worship and to remember the Lord, partook of His supper together, simply and only, as the members of Christ, refusing all names but the One above every other, but also refusing none of "His own" who by soundness in "the faith" and consistency of life were entitled to be there. Sectarianism, both in fact, and in name, was banished. They relied upon the truthfulness of the promise that "where two or three are gathered together in My name there am I in the midst of them," and proved it to be abundantly verified. There was no "officiating minister" or clergyman to dispense the elements. The Apostles' doctrine did not consider it necessary, nor could these searchers after truth find anything in the New Testament, answering to the one man appointed over a congregation absorbing in himself the prerogative of doing all the preaching, teaching, evangelizing, and ministry both towards God and man. Other Christians were added to this little company; they did not form a "church" of their own: it was sufficient that they were continuing in the only fellowship known to Scripture. Those were indeed days of simplicity and power. Numbers too, elsewhere adopted the same Apostolic method. Peace within and power without characterized the movement. There was of course plenty of opposition from both clergy and laity, nevertheless not a few of the most spiritual in the "churches" were attracted by the godliness of the lives and the opening up of the Scriptures from such a God-given ministry.

The soprano note of the whole movement was the exaltation of Christ Himself—devotion to His Person, Son

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of God, Son of Man, Lord of glory, Prince of the kings of the earth; His essential, official, and acquired glories were the delight of these companies of believers, of whom soon there was quite a considerable number. "Christ was everything and in all"—a confirmatory testimony "that this counsel and work was of God." Weigh the modern cults in the balances of the sanctuary by that one sure and supreme test, asking, "Where is Christ in your scheme? Does it glorify Him? Is He endeared to the heart and extolled in the mind?" and see what the result will be! Let it not be imagined that the leaders were a band of excited enthusiasts wishing to create sensations and calling attention to their religious novelties. Nothing could be farther from the truth. On the contrary, they were sober, intelligent, and intellectually considerably beyond the average. Some could have boasted of university honours, but neither advertising, photography, or even autography were in their line. They were content to be without prefix or affix to their names. Initials usually sufficed them, not through a spurious and assumed humility but of self-abnegation born of whole-hearted allegiance to their Lord, that He might the more be seen and heard and magnified!

Beyond all contradiction it was a deep spiritual work, and as scriptural as it was spiritual. Separation not to a creed, Church or party, but to Christ Himself, was the manner of their going, the consequence of which was a clean-cut, whole-souled separation from the world and its ways. Sinners were saved, and believers built up in their "most holy faith." The vigilant eye of the restless adversary was surely upon this Christ-exalting propaganda and what he could not accomplish from without by hostile critics and foes he cleverly engineered from within by those supposed to be its friends. "Clerisy" followed by subtle and evil speculations as to the Person of the Lord Jesus came from an unexpected quarter: division soon followed, bringing to light the fact that all unconsciously the early simplicity had been abandoned. It has been suggested that it takes about three generations to wipe out, largely if not wholly, the original landmarks of a divine work!

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The so-called "brethren movement" is no exception. "Unity" was the great watchword in the initial stages. "Brethren" then "dwelt together in unity" and the Lord "commanded the blessing," as He surely will in a yet future day when Israel and Judah are once more united on Mount Zion. (Ps. 133.)

Divisions have succeeded divisions and the glory of those days has departed. It is not the intention of the writer to dwell upon the details of the history and failures from 1848 and onwards; others have already done so on both sides of the Atlantic, but not with any honor either to the Lord or to themselves. The recital may gratify a morbid curiosity and be devoured greedily by those anxious to discredit the work or to confirm themselves in an anti-Apostolic position. It is highly suggestive that Ham, who discovered his father's nakedness and told his two brethren without, "met with severe condemnation, whilst those who would neither see nor publish the shame of their father are blessed." The failures of those holding the truth can never be a valid excuse for others refusing to act upon it.

At the conference already alluded to in London twenty years ago, it was suggested by those responsible that in asking Christians to come together, it was not with the idea of fixing blame here or there, nor for an amalgamation scheme uniting the various fragments, but ignoring the uncalled-for world-wide divisions of the past we should return to the scriptural principles and practices acted upon in the early part of the nineteenth century, applying them not to those known as "brethren" only, but to *the whole Church of God—the "brethren" of our Lord*. This would perpetuate the gracious action of the Spirit to which we all owed so much, and thus "continue in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship." Looking back over the subsequent years it cannot be said that the conference was a great success for the simple reason that the proposals have not materialized.

Sectarianism avowed or secreted pursues us; it has entered into the very vitals of our moral constitution. It is an enemy not only to unity, but alas, is often the com-

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panion of worldliness and carnality as at Corinth. It is quite possible, too, for a very rigid ecclesiasticism to walk arm in arm with a low moral and spiritual state and even of questionable commercial keenness. In one way and another "drift" is the strong tendency of the times, varying somewhat in form and character in different countries and places. In some particularly, if not indeed in all more or less, material prosperity—"the mammon of unrighteousness"—money—the "golden calf"—is the great dominating force with its crowds of worshippers. Many who formerly, in other circumstances, were earnest witnesses to an absent Lord, have fallen down before it, and are now but the merest derelicts. *Not money* but "the love of it" is the root of every kind of evil, which while some *coveted after*, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." It can be and has been a mighty weapon for good when used in harmony with the divine mind, but it can also be a serious instrument of mischief when assuming to direct the spiritual activities of the Lord's servants and people. "Centralization" is another source of danger—a self-imposed authority of the few, who probably with the best intentions form a kind of spiritual directorate, not for a local meeting only, but for a wide district, and in certain instances propose to rule a whole country! Closely allied to this is "Clerisy," that long-standing menace of the Church, the recoil from which is the recognition of *no authority* whatever "in the house of God" but "every man doing that which is right in his own eyes," under the delusion that this is "the liberty of the Spirit" instead of the license of the flesh. It has been affirmed recently, quite openly, that the movement recalling the people of God back to Scripture for everything was not intended to be permanent, but rather as a passing and temporary phase, and that the exigencies of our times demand other means to cope with them, and we must adapt ourselves to the changed conditions! In other words, human arrangements must supplant divine revelation, which by an inexorable law would place us eventually where the vast body of the so-called Church finds itself today—with Christ outside the door ("Laodicea") forced there by a self-complacent, lukewarm, nauseating profession!

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Brethren, the coming of the Lord draws nigh : Scripture holds out no hope for another "revival" before we meet Him in the air (the conversion of sinners is not alluded to by "revival"). Philadelphia, Rev. 3 7, 15, is the last, and if it be true that there is a correspondence between what is written to that assembly and the movement referred to in this article, will not every loyal heart who cherishes his Lord's approval listen with eager ear as He says, "*Hold that fast which thou hast that no man take thy crown.*" "And they continued steadfastly in the *Apostles' doctrine and fellowship*, and breaking of bread and in prayers."