# Fellowship— Its Privileges

# Responsibilities

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# **Foreword**

Several of the articles in this booklet appeared in "Help and Food," 1926-1927. These have been added to, and certain letters, relative to intercommunion, will be found in the Appendix.

Inquiry having been made for the articles in booklet form, and the prevailing unrest among the Lord's people, who seek to keep His word and not deny His Name, has led to this publication. The writer by no means claims originality for the thoughts expressed therein, and readily acknowledges its imperfection. May the gracious Lord deign to use it for His glory.

J. W. H. N.

# Fellowship, Its Privileges and Responsibilities

# Fellowship With Divine Persons

The end of all God's dealings in grace with us as His people is that, individually, we may be brought into the enjoyment of *fellowship with Himself*.

Innate in the soul of man is the sense of responsibility toward God. But it is not philosophy, human knowledge, and the like which give "boldness in the day of judgment;" no subterfuge will avail, nothing but the sense of guilt removed and sin fully met, can do this, for it is self-evident that no one could have "fellowship with the Father" who is in criminal fear before Him.

John in his first epistle, chap. 1:5, tells us, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." But who among the sons of men can measure up to this standard? Do we not naturally shrink from the exposure this necessarily entails? It sums up all man's pretension to fellowship, saying: "If we say we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." Fellowship, then, must be in the light, and on no other ground whatever can it be enjoyed.

The abstract character of John's first epistle has often been pointed out, but it is blessedly so about things which the feeblest believer's privileged to know and enjoy. God is brought down to us. The Word has become flesh. Eternal life has been seen, looked upon and handled; and all this, that the darkness might be dispelled and the believer be brought into the light—not for condemnation surely—but the question of sin being righteously settled, God now may be known, and fellowship with the Divine Persons may be enjoyed.

In the Person of the Son, God has been fully revealed, and the believer walks in the light of that revelation.

In chap. 1, verse 7, John writes, "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." It has been pointed out that this is not how, but where we walk. Every true believer has been put into this privileged place—for the child of God, there is no other!

Three things in this verse characterize the believer: First, he is "in the light as God is in the light." What a contrast this presents to the word spoken to Moses, "I will dwell in *thick darkness*;" and at Sinai, with its terrors, the word was, "If so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned." Even with Moses there was no "fellowship in the light," on the contrary, his words were, "I exceedingly fear and quake." There was much of what was good at Sinai, but man was not at rest there, the pavilion of God was darkness, and the light no man could approach unto. God was not *seen* or known, save by His acting; and when His voice was heard, the people besought that they might never hear it again. See Exodus 19:16-18; also 20:18, 19.

In the tabernacle and temple the veil shut God in and man outside; nearness, fellowship in the light, there could not be. Even Aaron, favored as he was in approach to God, had access into the holiest on the great day of Atonement only. But the Cross has changed everything; and the rent veil tells of distance removed, and of God come out to bless righteously. The believer is conscious of this, and the knowledge that every attribute of God has been fully vindicated and His Name glorified, gives peace to the conscience. The light no longer repels; we walk in it.

Secondly: "We have fellowship one with another." Though individually brought into the light, we find others there too, with whom we share common thoughts, common joys, common hopes.

Thirdly: We are there because "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." The more sensible we are of being "in the light," the more conscious we are that God has brought us there consistently with what He is, and removed every stain by the precious blood. We do not evade the light, or seek a way of escape from its searching rays. On the contrary, we are glad to know that what light demanded, love has provided, and that the God who knows us thoroughly, has Himself removed all that forbade our entrance into His holy presence.

If the heart is true, we can say, like the Psalmist, "Search me, 0 God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139: 33, 34). The believer, enjoying fellowship in the light, shares the thoughts of God as to sin and self, thankful to know that all has come under His eye and been fully judged at the cross. Thus the heart finds rest, peace reigns, and the end for which John wrote is reached-fulness of joy. "These things write we to you, that your joy may be full" (1 John 1:4).

## FELLOWSHIP

## "PART WITH ME" (John 13:8)

Another\* has defined *fellowship* as "Common thoughts together; common feelings, affections, objects; one heart, one mind."

For the proof of the nature and character of divine fellowship it would be difficult to turn to

a more expressive portion than from the 13th to the end of the 17th chapters of John. In verse S of chapter 13 the Lord expresses the necessity of His priestly service, that His own might be kept in unclouded communion with Himself. To have "part with Him" where He was going, there must be the constant removal of defilement contracted in passing through this sinful world. This service of love, carried on by the "washing of water by the Word" (Eph. 5:26), was symbolized when the Lord stooped to wash His disciples' feet. Peter only saw in that lovely, lowly service. the Lord's self-abnegation; hence his objection, "Thou shalt never wash my feet;" but when the Lord replied. "If I wash thee not thou hast no part with Me," Peter, in ignorant affection said, "Lord, not my feet only. but also my hands, and my head." There was indeed, and is, necessity for the latter ere the former can be known. Eut Peter (and every believer since that day) had been already "washed all over," viz., cleansed from iniquity; and the love that served past need remains unchanged to the end (ch. 13:1), insuring to the objects of that love, the continuous service of the Lord as our High Priest.

Beautifully illustrative of Christian communion n-as John's position at the supper table: "Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples whom Jesus loved" (ver. 23). Communion is the privilege of every Christian, but it is the "longing soul" that is satisfied, and the "hungry" are filled with good things (Ps. 107:9). It is in the conscious knowledge of the greatness of this love that the heart is happy, at rest, and at home in His company, knowing it is His delight to have us there. Thus, with confidence the head can lean on Jesus' breast in the enjoyment of His unfathomable grace.

Wonderful as this is, it is by no means all; for in the confidence that lore begets, the soul is led

on to understand the Father's appreciation of, and delight in, the Son: "The Father loveth the Son," and that Son is "the only begotten One in the bosom of the Father," and has declared Him.

Thus, as we appropriate the place the Lord would have us take, resting on His bosom, we learn the Father's love and grace, and begin to taste what soon we shall more perfectly know in communion with the Lord, the delight of the Father in the Son, and the Son's delight in the Father

Words that are unexplainable in any other connection will find their solution in this wavwords grouped together in these chapters (13 to 17). In verse 31 (ch. 13), for instance, the Lord says: "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; and if God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightwag glorify Him." What a wonderful circle of eternal glory is here! What depth of divine love! By the Spirit, we are introduced into this communion, to understand the perfect oneness existing between God the Father, in all that He is, and the Son of Man who here on earth could say that God had been glorified in Him; and then as a blessed consequence, "God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him." This surely is no. only by investiture of His acquired rights and titles as "Son of Man," but beyond all official glory, whether in heaven or earth, there assuredly lay that which was ever His personally. Hence, "God shall glorify Him in Himself."

That wonderful utterance of the 17th chapter flows out of these eternal counsels: "And now, Father, glorify Me with thine own self, with the glory I had with Thee, before the world was," and this expressed desire is founded on the attendant fact, "I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work Thou gavest Me to do."

Such was this glorious Person, who is before us in this wonderful group of chapters which gives us the extent and meaning of "Part with Me." Into this circle of divine counsels and affections we are led by the Holy Spirit, as witnesses and sharers in the joy of Christ, our souls finding rest and satisfaction in being there, where He is.

Another side of this "Part with Me," is disclosed when one of the twelve asked, "How is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us and not unto the world?" His answer was, "If a man love Me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Thus this wonderful fellowship in life with the Father and the Son is complete, and though not manifested to the world, is real and vital.

Added to all this personal glory, the Lord Jesus said to them, when going away, "All things that the Father hath are mine," and then tells them of the coming of the Spirit and His mission: "He shall take of mine, and show it unto you."

Are we able to bear these divine communications? Of ourselves surely we could have no competency, but Scripture assures us we can both comprehend and enjoy them: "God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God;" and again blessed and wonderful fact, "We have received the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."

As objects of the Father's heart, in whom the Son finds His delight, it is ours to have "part with Christ" in all that He has entered into, and what is yet to be manifested. By the ministrations of His grace, and the walk. of the Holy Spirit, this wonderful link with heaven is manifested, and intercourse by faith enjoyed between the Father

and the Son and His people here on earth, though not of the world. It is thus He can say, "Ye in Me and I in you." How close the bond, how sweet the fellowship! Into this illimitable circle of divine love, we have been introduced; the soul is maintained in it by the Spirit's power, and established in the intelligence of what is really eternal life. "This is life eternal, that they may know Thee, the only true God (the Father), and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."

#### FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SON

"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Cor. 1:9).

It. is instructive and beautiful to notice that, at the commencement of each corrective epistle, the apostle Paul reminds the saints of their calling, and usually commends whatever can be commended, before speaking of failure. If the thought of the exceeding grace of God, and His purpose in Christ Jesus, fails to recover the soul, what hope can there be? So, in the first epistle to the Corinthians, at the commencement, Paul wrote, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

Notice the fulness of the title given, "His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord." It covers the whole ground of Christianity. Let us then briefly dwell upon what this wonderful verse implies.

## (1) Our association, with Him in His death.

It will be joyfully conceded, surely, that all we have received and all that God has promised, comes to us in association with Christ, and that the foundation of everything is "His death." If we have been *planted together* in the likeness of His death, we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection (Rom. 6:5). The word "planted-together" here is unique; scholars tell us this is the

only place in the New Testament where the word so translated occurs. To transpose the words and say, "We altogether were planted," would not give the true sense, nor would "We all were planted together."

Another has said in reference to this scripture, "The idea of consolidation in one, of what could be looked at as having many component parts, is easily traced. In ordinary Greek (as contrasted with the Greek in Scripture), we might give, 'Growing together naturally, or necessarily connected together-,' as the meaning. In a secondary sense it is applied to a closed, healed wound, where the parts have grown together in one." This serves to show the closeness of our association with Him. Literally rendered, Romans 6:5 might read, "For if we have become co-planted in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in his resurrection."

But let us for a moment retrospect. "By man came death" (1 Cor. 15:21). The first man (Adam) not only brought in death as to the body, but before being driven out of Eden, he had become morally dead-totally insensible to what is of God. Outside of Eden, he became head of a fallen race; the dire results of his transgression became the common heritage of his posterity: "Even as by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12).

Into this state of moral ruin, where death held sway (because Satan had so signally triumphed over man), came the Son of God in grace. Made in the likeness of man (Himself guiltless, no taint of sin in Him, incorruptibly pure, and therefore not subject to death), He voluntarily drank the cup of God's righteous judgment which was our due. Made sin!—treated as if it were Himself who had violated the majesty of God's law, and He tasted, in its deepest bitterness, death as the

judgment of God against sin. He associated Himself with our guilt, that-by His death-we might become associated with Him in resurrection-life and glory.

What a mighty change has been wrought, introducing us into a place where no mere creature could possibly have a place. As a creature, we cannot rise above our own creature-thoughts and conditions. In association (fellowship) with Christ, death and judgment are behind us, and we have to do with the resurrection-power which raised Christ from the grave.

At the close of Romans 5, the writer speaks of the two headships—of Adam and of Christ-and he contrasts the position of those severally under those two heads before God. In the following chapter he shows how the soul reaches this new position, and how complete is the transference (as before God) from the Adam headship — under which all men are by natural birth-on to the ground of Christ's headship.

Do we sufficiently realize how impossible it is for a person to be under two headships at the same time? We acquiesce in this, but are we living in a conscious sense of haing died out of that condition to which the penalty of sin and death attached, having become identified with Jesus Christ in His death?

"Planted together in the likeness of His death" - the penalty having been fully met, the once guilty is completely cleared of all charge, and the guiltless One having borne the judgment of God, the once guilty is now accounted guiltless before God. "In that He died, He died unto sin once" (Rom. 6:10). There is, of course, only one interpretation of this passage: He died penally, once for all. Never will that question need to be raised again. The sentence under which we lay has been

executed; and not only this, but God's judgment against the *very root* which produced such sad fruit (sin in our nature), has been executed, and we are now in Christ, our new Head, so that the believer can sing:

Death and judgment are behind us, Grace and glory are before; All the billows rolled o'er Jesus, There they spent their utmost power.

Jesus died, and we died with Him,
"Buried" in His grave we lay;
One with Him in new creation,
Now "in Him" in heaven's bright day.

To the believers in Colosse, Paul wrote, "You being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh" (2:13)—that is of course morally dead-and entreats them thus: "Wherefore. if ye be dead with Christ, from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world are ye subject to (worldly) ordinances?" (Col. 2:20); and he continues, "Set your affections on things above and not on things on the earth. For ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3).

May God help us to be true to this fellowship, refusing all that merely appeals to the natural man.

#### **FELLOWSHIP**

# "THE FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SUFFERINGS"

(Phil. 3:10.)

The epistle to the Philippians is peculiarly precious. It does not unfold much in the way of doctrine, but gives us what may be called proper "Christian experience"-not necessarily the experience of a Christian, though doubtless the writer entered fully into the truth he wrote. The apostle was in bonds at the time of his writing to

the Philippians, and knew not how soon the cruel emperor, Nero, might order his execution.

He looks at these circumstances as an occasion given him of God to share Christ's sufferings. At the close of the first chapter he seeks to assure them, in the midst of untoward circumstances when the natural heart might reason why the apostle should be shut up in prison, and themselves exposed to adversaries. But suffering for Christ was the lot of believers, and their privilege in this evil world: "Unto you it is given in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for his sake" (chap. 1:29).

None would question the grace and God-given privilege which enabled them to believe on Christ, and the apostle assures them it was equally a gift and privilege to *suffer* for and with Him.

How far above our natural thoughts is this! And what a testimony to the power and operation of the Holy Spirit! What superiority to circumstances! The will of Yero is not considered; the whole question in this, woted servant's mind was whether the Lord would be better glorified and His people served by his living or by dying! So the apostle says, "What I shall choose, 1 cannot tell" (J. N. D.) . Both were blessed. If living, *Christ* was his object. If dying, it was to be with Christ so thoroughly was his heart in communion with the Lord. It would be a gain to go, but then service and suffering for His dear sake would be over, and so thoroughly was this beloved servant's will subservient, and his heart in communion with the Lord, that the prisoner, as it were, decides his own case apart from the question of the Emperor's will, and says, "I know that I shall remain and abide with you all." His path of service and suffering was not yet over; the Lord's words to Ananias must have their complete fulfilment; "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:16).

It is surely encouraging to any, who in some small degree may be suffering for His sake, to view the path as one of privilege, and to see how the Lord can support and make His people superior to all the circumstances of the way. Peter similarly encourages the "strangers scattered" who were pasing through a season of severe testing: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you, but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers Of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory shall be revealed ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Pet. 4:12, 13).

Suffering for Him, and reigning with Him (2 Tim. 2:12) are two things which God has joined together. What rich compensation will the coming glory prove for any little suffering or loss here!

"Close to His trusted side, In fellowship divine, No cloud, no distance, e'er shall hide Glories that then shall shine."

The quotation from Phil. 3:10 speaks of something beyond suffering for Christ. Paul had seen Christ in glory, and henceforth every earthly glory was eclipsed; no knowledge, however exalted, could now compare with the knowledge of Christ Jesus, the Lord. His one desire is expressed in the words, "That I may know Him." To know Him, is to know our association with Him in His present position. He is there in divine righteousness, introducing us to that place. This would necessarily take in all that He was in fulfilling the Father's will; His perfect devotion, His absolute obedience in all, that the Father might be glorified. His patience in suffering. His unparalleled sorrows and sufferings, in order that there might be no barrier to the free outflow of God's holy

love, made Him to the apostle an object which commanded, controlled, delivered and fortified the heart. The power acting in the new life was the power of His grace, and He became the supreme object of the heart. Henceforth, everything must go, and no path was too hard, no sacrifice too great, if by any means he "might arrive at the resurrection from among the dead" (J. N. D.).

Therefore Paul desired to have whatever fellowship with Christ would bring. The sufferings He endured, Paul would enter into; yea, more, he desired to die by the peculiar form of death that his blessed Master died, consequently he adds, "Being conformed to His death." Nothing should stand in the way of reaching the blessed goal ever before him; death in its worst form (crucifixion) would but take him into the fuller apprehension of that resurrection power which would bring him to Christ in glory.

To understand the . 'tude of the apostle, we must keep in mind that it is a glorified Christ that was before the apostle's eyes, and no intervening things must be allowed to come in between his soul and the blessed Object of his affections. Such an attitude is surely part of "The fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." By reason of his unique ministry, Paul could say, as no other, "Now I rejoice in sufferings for you, and fill up that which is lacking (which remained to be suffered) of the afflictions of Christ for His body's sake, which is the church, whereof I am made minister (Col. 1:24).

His sufferings (he was writing from his prison at Rome) were for the precious truths especially comprehended in his commission—on account of the assembly, Christ's Body. The Lord had been pleased to bring this dear servant in communion with Himself in a special way, that he might serve the blessed purpose so dear to Him, of having

those for whom He died in special nearness to Himself, as His Body. This truth was, to the apostle, worth suffering for-it was that mystery hidden, but now made known, which completed the cycle of truth—nothing further remaining unrevealed. May we too prize these precious revelations, and be prepared, if need arises, to suffer for them.

#### FELLOWSHIP

"THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE HOLY GHOST" (See Phil. 2:1; 2 Cor. 13: 14.)

The fact that these are the only occasions in the Scriptures where the expression, "The fellowship of the Holy Ghost," occurs, by no means lessens its importance; it. should rather lead the careful reader to enquire the special significance of its use where it occurs. It would seem that in both cases the apostle had in view those who were not keeping rank-not going on in a way he could commend.

At first this may seem strange, but it surely is significant that under the Spirit's guidance it is not found in the epistles written by the apostle to those assemblies where they were going on happily, with nothing to correct.

The apostle appeals to the beloved Philippians in ch. 2:1, thus: "If there be any fellowship of the Spirit," and this was the basis of his desire for them. We know that the assembly in Philippi was in danger of disintegration, not through the evil work of the "enemies of the Cross of Christ," nor from the persecuting power of Imperial Rome, but that internal strife was doing its baneful work, and threatened to blight the testimony of this company in whom Paul had found so much joy.

At Corinth, where so much existed which caused the apostle deep sorrow of heart, they came behind in no gift, nor in knowledge, but sorely lacked in the grace and the holy ways of Christ. In the beginning of his first letter Paul expressed a desire that they should be "perfectly ioined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10). It has been pointed out that the word used here has in it the thought of setting a disjointed limb. This surely would be fitting in the connection in which it occurs, for dislocation had indeed taken place in the gathering. There was external unity, but internal strife, as a body dislocated, though not torn asunder.

Similarly, at the end of the second epistle, before the apostle utters his benediction he says in chap. 13:11, "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect." I understand that this exhortation might literally be rendered, "Be fitted together as a mosaic." It was a needed word in connection with the conditions existing. Thus only would the saints in Corinth know "The fellowship of the Holy Ghost."

The unity of the Spirit of God may be kept in an external way; we may be perfectly correct in our ecclesiastical position, yet lack what the apostle desired for these saints, viz.: "The fellowship of the Holy Ghost." Might we not profitably connect with this the happy condition existing among the early believers, when Saul the persecutor had, by the grace of Christ, been called and commissioned by the Lord, and henceforth, as Paul, builded what he had once ravished. Thus we read in Acts 9:31, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, Galilee and Samaria, and were edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied."

The "comfort of the Holy Spirit" can only be known as "fellowship of the Spirit" is enjoyed. Little wonder that those early saints were *edified* and *multiplied*. In like conditions there would be no barren and profitless meetings, but power and grace would result as in those days, others would be drawn to Christ and added to the company of His own. Alas! how often we mourn over the reverse, and instead of rejoicing in the number of the saints being *multiplied*, we sorrow at their *d windling* or scattering.

May we not conclude that there is a lesson for us all in Paul's use of this expression? If the Spirit has formed an indissoluble bond, and we are exhorted to "keep the unity of the Spirit." surely in so doing we shall know the "Fellowship of the Holy Ghost."

#### FELLOWSHIP

### FELLOWSHIP OF THE LORD'S TABLE

Considerable confusion exists in the minds of many of the Lord's people regarding the Lord's *Table* and the *Supper*. That these are distinct truths, though blessedly allied, must be evident to every careful reader of the Word. 1 Cor. 10 speaks of the *Table*; and chapter 11 speaks of the *Supper*.

It may be helpful to notice that the expression "Lord's table" is found twice in the Old Testament-Ezekiel 41:22 and Malachi 1:7. These scriptures make clear that the altar and the table of the Lord are identical, and are inseparable in thought from the sacrifice.

Is it not evident that in taking up Israel in 1 Cor. 10 the apostle does so to illustrate *Christian position and responsibility?* All Israel "passed through the sea,'? and all "were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;" all "ate the

same spiritual meat," and "all drank of that spiritual Rock." The whole nation was evidently in a certain position before God.

The apostle next shows that many were not true to their God-given position. He says, "But with many of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness." Three things are especially charged:

- (1) Religious corruption (idolatry).
- (3) Worldly associations (fornication).
- (3) Profanity (the people spake against God and Noses and despised the manna.)

How significant in the light of what we see in Christendom today!

The apostle next proceeds to speak of Christian position and responsibility, speaking as to "wise men," that they may weigh his words. Communion, or fellowship, of which the Table is the expression, is what he desires to bring before them, that the Corinthians might shun all association with idolatry.

In relation to the Table we must guard against materializing-a mistake which has greatly hindered the people of God in the proper appreciation of this important truth. Scripture speaks of being "partakers of the Lord's table," which evidently points to the elements of which we partake. Might we not say that, since the Lord's table speaks of that which is the basis and bond of fellowship—the death of Christ—every believer is positionally connected with the Table. "We being many are one loaf, one body," surely cannot be limited to any section or company among the Lord's people, but is true of all. But, as in Israel, many of the people of God are not true to their God-given position: we could not say that all Christians are true to the fellowship of the Lord's table.

The death of the Lord entirely closed before God the history of man in the flesh, and every link with Him now must be in the Spirit. Whatever has been introduced in the house of God, which is of man, or appeals to the flesh, is a practical denial of the cross of Christ. Everything must be excluded which the death of Christ has excluded. Paul, writing to the Galatians, says, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." This is not the world in a bad sense only, but all that would reinstate man in the flesh. In the 19th chapter of Numbers, Eleazar, the priest, was to burn the red heifer wholly, with "cedar wood, hyssop and scarletthat is, all from the greatest to the least in creation was cast into the fire. To sanction, by association, that which falsifies the cross of Christ, is to be untrue to the table of the Lord.

It will be noticed that in 1 Cor. 10 the cup is spoken of first, then the loaf. This fully accords with the thought expressed, viz.: that in 1st Corinthians 10 it is Christian position. In the chapter following, this is reversed, and the order of the institution of the supper maintained. The supper is Christian privilege. So, it would seem that one might be in the fellowship of the Lord's table, and not be able to partake with fellow-saints in the celebration of the Lord's supper. There is no "meeting" in chapter 10, but individual responsibility: i.e., we are, as believers, in a certain bond of fellowship (through the Lord's death) and each is responsible to be true to that fellowship—hence the warnings.

At the close of the chapter this is elucidated, and it is evident that the action of some-eating in idol temples, or of that which was offered to idols, chap. S:10—compromised fellowship; for not only did they commit themselves by their act,,

but compromised the whole company of saints. One might claim liberty to pursue a certain course connecting one's self with some religious corruption inconsistent with the death of Christ. No such liberty exists. We are obligated to be true to the fellowship of the Lord's table, and those who seek to walk consistently with it.

In service for the Lord, while there is surely the liberty of the servant, yet we have our assembly associations, and should see that we do not recognize anything inconsistent with the death of Christ, and so compromise fellowship, lest the spirit of Israel mark us, as in Malachi 1:7, and we lose the Lord's approval in our service.

After the foregoing it new ardly be pointed out that the Lord's table has existed since the Cross. This thought should preserve from the presumptuous claim put forth by some today, that they alone have "the Table," and it should guard against unscriptural expressions, such as "Receiving to the Lord's table;" also "Putting away from the table," and "Setting up another table." As to the first--Christians are received to the breaking of bread. As to the second expression, Scripture says, "Put away from among your-selves." As to "setting up another table," nowhere in the New Testament, that 1 am aware of, have we such a thing contemplated. In 1 Car. 10 there are the two fellowships, the "table of the Lord," and the "table of demons." To apply the latter term to any company of believers is, to say the least, most reprehensible.

In the breaking of bread we manifest a fellowship already existing: here, we are on the ground of privilege. We come together as in association with Christ, to go back in memory to Gethsemane, Gabbatha, and Golgotha. Our hearts recall His undying love, we think of Him in circumstances of unparalleled sorrow and loneliness, when that blessed heart must have yearned for sympathy, so soon to be betrayed and sold to a rabble crowd who were clamoring for His blood-and in the sense of that hour when, absolutely alone, He must drink that bitter cup, and His holy soul be shrouded in midnight darkness!

It was on that night He instituted the memorial supper, that His own, during the period of His absence, might ever have before them His love in all its greatness. Does not such unfathomable devotion appeal with irresistible power to our hearts? Can we ever treat lightly those words "REMEMBER ME?" Can we treat this desire with cold neglect? What, beloved fellow-believer, will be our feelings, when we see Him, if we have not kept His word?

It must be clear to every single-eyed believer that the saints in the first days met thus together for this simple service, the bond which united them, and still unites all the peeple of God— Christ's precious death-and that eternal bond formed by the Spirit which always exists, though the outward manifestation of it may be lacking. "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." For an obedient heart no other membership is desired or necessary, and the principles upon which those early believers acted remain true for faith today. They met together as members of the body of Christ, owning no other headship than that of Christ, as "Head of the body." The presence of the Spirit was recognized, and God was worshined in the Spirit.

# $\begin{array}{c} \textbf{FELLOWSHIP} \\ \textbf{\textit{THE UNEQUAL YOKE}} \end{array}$

"Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what 'concord hath

Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" (2 Cor. 6:14-16). "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove (expose) them" (Eph. 5:11).

Peter, in his first epistle, says: "He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" [manner of living], quoting from Lev. 11:45: "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

With Israel, separation from the nations was strictly enjoined, no alliances were to be made, national or individual; those who bore the name of Jehovah must reflect His holy character. Neglect in carrying out the plain instructions of Deuteronomy (disobedience the Word of God), brought upon Israel God's governmental hand in judgment, and caused them to perish as a nation. Their present condition should speak loudly to the children of God today. A holy God has called us to reflect His character, and tread a path of entire separation from all that is contrary to Himself.

The scripture already quoted from 2 Corinthians is far reaching in its application. It is often used in relation to the marriage tie, and rightly so, surely, since this is the closest of earthly relationships. How can two walk together except they be agreed? (Amos 3:3). What sorrow, what disaster, has been occasioned by disobedience to this plain scripture! We can never violate a scripture principle with out dire results.\*

Then how could a believer have fellowship in the light (1 John 1), and partake of the holy emblems of the Lord's Supper, thus announcing par-

<sup>\*</sup>The reader would do well in this connection to secure a booklet, "The Unequal Yoke," by C. H. M., 6 cts.

ticipation with Christ in death, and belong to any secret organization? Scripture says, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." How then can a believer belong to an association whose rules demand utmost secrecy, under oath?

Take, for instance, what is best known: "Free-masonry." This may be a beneficial organization for a man of the world, but for a child of God to link himself with it, is a total denial of his heavenly calling, if not worse.

It is admittedly an anti-Christian organization, for one of its recognized best authorities. Albert G. Mackey (a voluminous writer in support of Masonry), says in his "Encyclopedia" (pp. 640, 641), "I contend without any sort of hesitation, that Masonry is, in every sense of the word, except one, and that its least philosophical, an eminently religious institution, and that it is indebted to the religious element which it contains for its continued existence, and that without its religious element, it would scarcely be worthy of cultivation by the wise and good." On page 641 the writer continues: "The religion of Freemasonry . . . is not Christianity." If that be so, then Freemasonry is a false religion. On the same page of the Encyclopedia he says, "The religion of Freemasonry is not sectarian. It admits men of every creed &thin its hospitable bosom, rejecting none and approving none for his peculiar faith. It is not Judaism . . . it is not Christianity." So, Christianity is treated as a sectarian religion and put in the same category as Judaism, Buddhism, Brahmanism and Mohammedanism!

Moreover, the God of masonry is not the God of the Bible. Their prayers are offered not to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, but to the G.A.O.T.U., Masonry's technical name for their God!

In a book by Hislop, "Two Babylons" (easily procurable as it is still in print), we read the following: "It is admitted that the secret system of Freemasonry was originally founded on the mysteries of the Egytian Isis, the goddess-mother, or wife of Osiris. But what could have led to the union of a Masonic body with those mysteries, had they not had particular reference to architecture, and had the god who was worshiped in them not been celebrated for his success in perfecting the art of fortification building?" In view of the foregoing, it must surely be admitted that no Christian could possibly link himself with such an organisation and be a disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ!

That many are ensnared in it, not knowing its character, is admitted, but any believer who would consent to rule out all mention of the Name which is above every name, has compromised in the saddest. way. Scripture says of this and every other worldly association, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing."

Does not the promise to the faithful doer of the Word suffice? "I will receive you, and will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Paul to the Ephesians wrote: "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them" (chap. 5:11). Let us then seek grace, not to compromise our heavenly calling, but "walking in the light as He is in the light, have fellowship one with another."

#### **FELLOWSHIP**

# ASSEMBLY FELLOWSHIP

The statement in Acts 2:41, 42 that those who received the Word and were baptized "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship," embraced only the truth of salvation through Christ and kindred truths; but further revelation through the ministry of the apostle Paul was to complete the canon of holy Scripture. (See Col. 1:25, 26). This embraced "the revelation of the mystery," which had not been made known before; so the words, "the apostles' doctrine and fellowship," may be given a wider application in our day.

The fellowship enjoyed by the saints on the day of Pentecost, in which they "continued steadfastly," was by no means confined to the breaking of bread; a most precious ordinance, which, however, there is a danger of taking out of its place as given in the word of God. We must not, therefore, limit our thought of fellowship to the act of breaking bread, a mistake which would rob us of much that is precious and important.

# Fellowship in the Beginning

On the day of Pentecost, a divine unity was formed by the Holy Spirit. Believers were not merely an aggregate of saved persons, but by the Spirit were baptized, or united, in one Body, of which Christ risen is the Head. The will of man did not form it— as in the case of a human organization-nor is its maintenance or direction by man's will. The Holy Spirit which formed that Body is alone competent to direct it; and He has the deepest and most intimate interest in carrying out and maintaining this unity for the fulfilment of the Father's counsels and the glory of His Son.

No power can break this unity, since its maintenance is the Spirit's work; but we are exhorted to "keep with diligence the unity of the Spirit, in the uniting bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). It is not only a question of suitable conduct (an important matter, of course), but if the individual position be ever so clearly understood, and the affections and walk correspondingly excellent, it would be serious indeed to overlook or belittle this important truth by not endeavoring to keep the Spirit's unity.

The true ground of gathering for believers in this dispensation is that of the Body of Christ. This is the only ground or principle of gather-

This is the only ground or principle of gathering together, for fellow-believers now. Let us con-

sider one or two of our relat. ...ships:

(1) The Relationship of "saints" would not be characteristic of this dispensation. Saints there were from the beginning; as 1 Sam. 2:9 and many other scriptures show.

(2) Relationship of the "children of God." This again is not peculiar to this dispensation, as it includes men of faith throughout past dispensations. Not until Israel was called out of Egypt was there a gathering together by God, but even this was national, not vital; it was a mixture of saints and sinners. It separated Jews from Gentiles, but in the present dispensation God recegnizes "Jews, Gentiles, and the Church of God" (1 Cor. 10:32).

It is assuredly true that the saints of God are one company, and children of God gather together; but the fact of their being "saints" and "children" could not make Jew and Gentile one. In the past and in the future (not in the Church) Jew and Gentile remain distinct, whatever may be the work of grace in the soul.

The early Christians evidenced that Spiritformed unity by their godly care and interest in one another; they were "of one heart and one soul," and "great grace was upon them all." As yet there was no departure from the truth; there was nothing among them inconsistent with the truth of the one Body. But we are not at the beginning of the dispensation. We are in what Scripture terms "the last days," days of sad departure, and confessed difficulty. Indeed, the true heart may often repeat the words of Moses, "Show me now thy way." Amid the babel of voices and confusion of tongues, how sweet to hear the answering voice, "This is the way; walk ye in it."

# Fellowship in the Dispensation's Closing Days

Has God a way for His people in the present universal failure? Is there a clearly defined path for faith in these closing days? If we ask. "Has the Word of God changed?" Faith readily answers, "No." Has the revealed Word altered in any wise through man's failure? Again the answer must be in the negative. Whatever the failure of the Assembly, whatever the character of the day in which we live, our privilege and responsibility is to walk according to the mind of God as revealed in His Word.

Someone has asked, "Should we not spread the Lord's Supper free from all sectarian names and communion, throw open the door, and invite all who love the Lord to come together? For, in fact, the one loaf upon the table does bear witness that we are 'one bread, one Body,' and there is no other body that faith can own but the Body of Christ."

"Why should we not do this? I answer, The Lord has a welcome for all His own. That is right; but He is the "Holy and the True" who welcomes them, and He cannot give up His nature. How has the true Church become the invisible Church? Has it been without sin on her part? Is it her

misfortune. not her fault? Take those seven epistles in Revelation, and trace the descent from the loss of first love in Ephesus to the sufferance of that woman Jezebel in Thyatira, and on through dead Sardis, to the present time; can we ignore the past, and, as though nothing had happened, begin again? What would it be but mere hardness of heart to say so? Suppose an invitation "to all Christians" were accepted, and that we were able to reassemble all the members of Christ at the supper-brought together with their jarring views, their worldly entanglement, their evil associations-how far would this answer to the character implied by the Lord's Table? How far would He be owned and how in this coming together? With the cause of all the scattering not searched out and judged, what would such a gathering be but a defiance of the holy discipline by which the saints were scattered? What would it be but another Babel? Can we tolerate the thought that such an external unity would be dear to Christ? Could He desire it apart from true cleansing and fellowship in truth?"

All this was felt by many of the Lord's people in the past century; it led them to see that. they were responsible to cleanse themselves from all worldly and sectarian associations, and act in obedience to the Word of God. This led to a great accession of light from the Lord, resulting in a coming together in His name alone, to partake of the supper, and for worship and prayer in dependence upon the Holy Spirit. There was no effort to rebuild what man's sin had broken down, nor to start some new movement with a better creed, or more correct ecclesiastical procedure. They believed the promise of Matt. 18:20 remained true for faith, and they acted upon it.

The freshness of those "early days" was a reflex of what characterized the early Church. Unworldliness, devotion to the Lord, love to His people, and the expectation of Christ's speedy return characterized them. The history of the movement is a record of God's unfailing goodness, and of the sufficiency of God's Word and the Spirit's presence. But the enemy's effort to mar and spoil has not been lacking. Human weakness caused the fine gold to become dim; worldliness opened the door for independency and division, calling for deep humiliation and confession on the part of those to whom God in grace gave such privileges and light.

Thus we are ever reminded of man's failure. Even in the days of the apostles many left the side of Paul for an easier path.

Still, the truth remains, and to the end of the dispensation we are promised an "open door" (Rev. 3:8). The word is, "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His, and Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19). That which bears His name is likened unto a great house where there are divers vessels, some to honor and some to dishonor; from the latter, those who would be faithful are bidden to separate, that the Master may have pleasure in using them for His service. Wherever evil is entrenched and sheltered, separation is imperative if we would be true to Christ. Personal holiness is enjoined not in isolation, but "with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

#### **FELLOWSHIP**

# "WITH THEM THAT CALL ON THE LORD OUT OF A PURE HEART"

**THE** responsibility of the child of God is to please Him, and for this he must be obedient to His Word and acquaint himself with it; and this is not legality, for the new nature delights in

keeping it. The believer is called to "the obedience of Christ"—to obey as He obeyed.

In writing to Timothy, the apostle, in his first letter, instructed his beloved son in the faith "how to behave in the house of God, the assembly of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15), for departure from the truth was not as vet characteristic of the assembly. Years after, when in Rome, as the prisoner of the Lord, the mass of Christians in Asia Minor where he had labored so much, turned away from him (2) Tim. 1:15). Not that they gave up the profession of Christianity or truths taught by Paul, but faith had weakened and they shunned open identification with a man in disgrace and reproach, a prisoner held by the authorities. Demas had turned aside to an easier path than the "testimony of the Lord" called to (2 Tim. 4:10), and at his first appearance before Nero, no man stood by the aged apostle (2 Tim. 4:16). In his last letter to this devoted servant, so "like-minded" with the apostle, he speaks of the last days of this Church dispensation as "perilous times" — times that would be characterized by a refusal of sound doctrine; a race after something new; turning away from the truth to fables; heaping to themselves teachers, having itching ears (2 Tim. 4:3, 4).

These perilous times are manifestly upon us. "The mystery of iniquity" which was even then present, more and more apparent as the end draws near, culminates in the revelation of Antichrist. It was foretold that "false teachers would bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them" (2 Pet. 2:1), also that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being received." So that, not recovery was prophesied, but that the professing body becomes a false witness.

As we have already seen, God has not left His people without direction for days of sad departure; He has marked out a plain path for one who desires to be faithful to the end, and the apostle in this 2d epistle to Timothy, gives explicit direction for God's servant amid the iniquity, corruption and disorder of the professing body holding a place of responsibility as the House of God.

What a stay to the soul to be assured that "The firm foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal. The Lord knoweth them that are His; and, Let every one who nameth the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19, J.N.D.). It is surely a consolation in days when so many of the Lord's people are immersed in worldly schemes and unholy associations, when the line of demarcation between Church and world is well nigh obliterated, that He knows those who are His. But the believer-as set apart to God and bearing Christ's holy Name-is responsible to "withdraw from iniquity."

In the verse following, the professing body is likened to a great house where "there are vessels of gold and silver, also of wood and of earth, some to honor, some to dishonor;" and he that purges himself from the unclean vessels shall be "a vessel unto honor, sanctified, meet for the Master's use and prepared unto every good work." What direction could be more explicit?

The words of another may be fittingly quoted in this connection:

"The whole of that which calls itself Christian is looked at here as a great house. The Christian is in it outwardly, in spite of himself; for he calls himself Christian (and the great house is all that calls itself "Christian"), but he cleanses himself personally from every vessel which is not to the Lord's honor. This is the rule of Christian faithfulness; and thus, personally cleansed from fellowship with evil, he shall be a vessel unto honor, fit for the Master's use. Whatsoever is contrary to the honor of Christ, in those who bear His Name, is that from which he is to cleanse h imself."

"This separation from evil is not merely negative; it is the effect of the realization of the Word of God in the heart. I then understand what the holiness of God is, His rights over my heart, the incompatibility of His nature with evil; 1 feel that I dwell in Him and He in me; that Christ must be honored at all costs; that that which is like Him alone honors Him; that His nature, His rights over me are the only rule of my life. That which thus separates me unto Him, and according to what He is, separates me thereby from evil. One cannot walk with those who dishonor Christ, and at the same time honor Him in one's own walk" (Synopsis, vol. 5, p. 189).

These are words which -- lo well to consider. Painful as it may be to separate one's self from those otherwise estimable, the one who desires to be *true* to *Him* must withdraw at all costs.

It may mean a narrow path, and as man estimutes, "hinder our usefulness," but the servant's business is to obey; and the apostle anticipating this says such an one is a "vessel meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." How can one have fellowship with those who in practice deny the truth? How can one walk with those who in practice deny the Lord His place in the midst of His own; who constantly quench the Spirit by the substitution of man's order.' And how can one keep "the unity of the Spirit" with those who practically deny it?\*

<sup>\* &</sup>quot;Here too faith must be exercised, the very consequences which men threaten with, may seem in-part to follow. We know Him who had to say, 'I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for naught and in vain,' but who could also say, 'Yet surely my judgement is with the Lord and my work with my God.' It is of such an one we arc followers; and as the apostle has already reminded us, we are not to expect to have a path different from His. For a just estimate of our work, we may have to wait for the day of account, or perhaps for a day of resurrection."—F. W. G.

But the servant's path is not one of isolation, necessarily, and a plain paith for faith is before us in what follows: "Follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those who call upon the name of the Lord out of a pure heart." These principles are to be followed with fellow-believers.

Righteousness is placed first, for the spirit must breathe the pure atmosphere of God's presence, and separation from what dishonors Him is surely that. Faith is necessary to discern and walk in a path where are no human props, and the soul has to learn what is and what is not of the Lord.

Love next follows; it is preserved by righteousness and faith, for it is not mere human sentimentality that is to guide us. John, in his letter to Gaius, speaks of "love in the truth." Much is said in these days of "liberality," of "brotherly love," of "tolerance," and the like, which comes dangerously near to sacrificing truth for the sake of peace. But the last named is the issue of what has gone before. *Peace* has ever been, and is, the effect of righteousness and divine love.

Treading this path of faith, we are promised others likeminded. "The Lord knoweth those who are His;" we do not; but faith can distinguish those who walk with a single eye, and call upon the Lord out of a pure heart. These we are to know and own, seek their company, enjoy their fellowship. We are not promised a perfect company-a company of amiable individuals who never do any wrong, but where the Lord's honor is paramount, and where is the genuine desire to hold fast the Lord's word, it is not merely a negative separation from error and evil but a positive separation to **Him** as "the Holy and True;" there the faithful heart will find its rest: "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste" (Song 2:3).

## FURTHER REMARKS ON ASSEMBLY FELLOWSHIP

Reference has already been made to the remarkable work of the Holy Spirit in the early years of the nineteenth century.

As abundant matter is obtainable still, that gives fullest details of the movement\* it will suffice to say there rapidly sprang up in the British Isles and other parts in Jing India, companies of the Lord's people, separated from religious organization, and meeting in simplicity according to scripture, as found in the early chapters of the Acts. The presence of the Spirit in the assembly, the Lord in the midst of those gathered to His name, and the unity of the body and Headship of Christ, were cardinal truths which bound hearts together in blessed fellowship. As a result, there was great accession of truth. The heavenly character of the assembly, the pre-millennial coming of the Lord (the rapture), and connecting prophetic truths, also a fuller gospel preached bore blessed witness to the Lord's faithfulness to His people, when He is given the place of preeminence as Head of the body, and the Holy Spirit is free to unfold the truth in its blessed simplicity. Need we be surprised that the enemy soon sought the disintegration of such a testimony? Scarcely had twenty years elapsed since a handful of the Lord's people gathered in simplicity in the city of Dublin, counting upon His promised presence in the midst of those gathered simply to His Name; when about the year 1845, trouble arose at Plymouth, England, where the Spirit had some years before wrought mightily.

B. W. Newton and his active sympathizers, were evidently, never in heart with the position

<sup>(1\*)</sup> The Brethren, Their Origin, Progress and Testimony. Andrew Miller. Also, A Divine Movement. Loizeauz Brothers.

taken, since J. N. D. states he had on good authority that B. W. N. said that he "10 years ago pressed the principles," I have now done, but declares "he always thought them a delusion," and that he "joined the brethren as a sect and continued with them as such." It is also abundantly clear that B. W. N. had his own system of doctrine, among other things — at that time — denouncing the teaching of the rapture, holding that the church must pass through the tribulation and other errors. (2\*) There was also a studied system of clerisy and determined effort to keep out any not in sympathy with his teaching.

This forced out the greater portion of the gathering, about 100 withdrawing and so the first break in the happy unity took place. This was quickly accentuated by B. W. Newton's published ministry, which contained blasphemous utterances against the Person of Christ, details will be found in the pamphlets and books referred to. (3") As a result, in 1848, while in all part of the country brethren were meeting for humiliation, confession and prayer because of this sad condition, "seeking a right way," the leaders of Bethesda Chapel, Bristol, England, received to break bread several of B. W. Newton's devoted friends and partisans. This most unhappy action brought in its trail greatest disaster and dishonor to the Lord and rent finally, so-called Brethren into two camps known henceforth as Open Brethren and Exclusives, (the writer would rather not use the designations, but it is unavoidable). The action of Bethesda (Open Brethren) was upheld by the leaders and finally a letter was circulated, known henceforth as "The letter of the ten." (4\*)

<sup>(2\*)</sup> Narrative of facts, Ecclesiastical Vol. 4, page 24.

<sup>(3\*)</sup> The whole case of Plymouth and Bethesda—W. Trotter.

<sup>(4&</sup>quot;) See appendix, page 65.

Space and inclination forbid going into details so often reiterated, sufficient to say a principle was established then and has up to this day been strongly maintained by the majority of so-called open-brethren, that association with evil does not necessarily defile.

Andrew Miller wrote in his book-referred to (page 59), "The question wag.-now fairly raised as to whether so-called brethre... were really gathered on the ground of the unity of the assembly, or merely as independent congregations. Bethesda (open brethren so-called) had deliberately given up the ground she professedly had occupied fellowship with brethren, had adopted INDE-PENDENCE and openly avowed it. All who adhered to the principle of 'ONE BODY' as the true ground of Christian fellowship were directly epposed to it." The latter henceforth were known as "Exclusives."

OPEN and EXCLUSIVE BRETHREN (so-called).

The writer has nothing but deepest regard for our brethren beloved, known as "Open," and thanks God on every remembrance for their gospel zeal and devotedness to the Lord, thankfully acknowledging that as a body, they have thoroughly cleared themselves of the Christ dishonoring doctrines of B. Newton. It is of *principles* and not *persons* we now speak. For this we need go no further than a pamphlet just published (1929) "The Local Assembly" by G. H. Lang. In this, the writer labors at length to show-what he considers-the baneful effects of that which he terms "exclusivism," and the beneficial influence of "open" principles.

The divergent principles are concisely stated thus:

"Here then is the vital difference. Open brethren hold that the Lord intended each assembly to stand and act for itself, according to His word, directly responsible to Himself; having to deal only with individuals presenting themselves for communion: neither responsible for nor bound by the church action of another assembly, but testing them by the word when an individual therefrom presents himself, otherwise leaving it alone. Whereas Exclusive brethren hold that all assemblies together form an outward visible unity, and that consequently the receiving or rejecting of a person by one assembly is binding upon all the assemblies." (The Italics are the writer's).

This fairly states the case with the one exception that no unscriptural discipline is binding upon every assembly, but should such a case arise godly care would dictate to the nearby gatherings to seek prayerfully and humbly to exercise consciences by application of the word.

Abundant testimony is forthcoming that most of our dear brethren-known as Open-maintain the principle of *independency*. Some meetings there are, where godly care is exercised and letters of commendation demanded, ere one is allowed to freely fellowship.

Does association with evil defile?

2 John 11 ought to suffice as an answer to the question. Here it is clear that by fellowship with an evil doer, the associate is "partaker of his evil deeds." If scripture places a man in that position, surely he is defiled. Could any intelligent company therefore receive a defiled person to break bread? Yet Mr. Muller stated in a letter to J. G. Deck that Bethesda received those "who came from persons preaching damnable heresy" providing they found them to be sound.

This letter was in reply to inquiries by Mr. Deck as to Bethesda usages, and led to the brother's refusal to further fellowship (5\*).

Again, 1 Cor. 5, 6, shows conclusively that association with an evil doer defiles, and in 2 Cor. 7, 11, they were cleared of the matter by dealing

<sup>(5\*)</sup> Statement for examination as to fellowship with Open Brethren by F. W. G. published by Loizeaux Bros.

with the defilement. See also for principle Haggai 2:11-13. (6").

Nothing in support of open reception can be deduced from the scripture Bethesda used. Romans 15:7, for this is not direction as to assembly fellowship, but of the recognition by an individual of the work of grace in another.

The result of this principle of action, advocated and practiced by so-called open brethren and independency, has been well put by the late J. N. Darby as follows: "It entails the consequences that I might participate in the exclusion of a wicked person in one meeting, and take the Lord's supper with him in another." (Collected Writings Vol. 33:47.)

It must be evident that the adoption of loose principles inevitably leads to loss of scriptural discipline and with this gone, true assembly ground is lost and order of the house of God set aside by the substitution of an association which makes its own regulations, and accept or reject the decision of other gatherings according to their own judgments.

Another (7\*) has written, "Would any responsible member of a household admit within its doors a person who came from a house where there was infection, provided the person-as yet-showed no symptoms of the disease? Let the fact that all believers are not only God's house, but are one body in Christ have its full weight, with the two or three gathered to the Lord's name, and they will maintain the order of God's house; and fellowship of the members of Christ's body is imperative with them, and intercommunion could only be with assemblies who hold to truth and holiness."

(7\*) See appendix, page 49.

<sup>(6\*)</sup> Also Open Brethren, their origin, principles and practices by Hamilton Smith of England. Loizeaur Eros. New York.

There is laboured effort on the part of many beloved "Open" brethren to prove that the only ground of gathering today is Matthew 18:20. Have not these words been greatly misapplied? Do they refer to a permanent ecclesiastical position, irrespective of condition, or do they not rather apply to the *actual* gathering together in the value and authority of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ? A pure heart in those who thus meet, is, of course, of greatest importance. It surely must be a coming together, with the Lord's interests before us. Thus such a company would meet as His representatives on earth, and to such as ihus gather together, nothing would be of importance but that which concerns Him.

As in contradistinction to the claim of our dear brethren that scripture only recognizes independent assemblies, the-so-called-Exclusives have ever held-whatever may be their differences on minor points-that scripture emphatically teaches the unity of assemblies. Is not the true ground of gathering for this dispensation, "There is one body?" Can this be consistently controverted? This blessed unity has been formed by the Spirit, for we read, "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13). This Spirit formed unity can never be broken, we are, however, entreated to "Keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace." (Eph. 4:3.) This cannot be done by a confederacy of meetings, nor amalgamation, nor by gathering a few together afresh who agree on certain views of scripture, neither by a return of 1828 conditions. We must go back to the beginning and seek to walk according to the truth. "There is one body," anything less is surely sectarian, from which may God deliver His people.

It is said (8\*) that the only alternative to separate assemblies is "federated assemblies," or a "circle of fellowship" with a "central authority." Neither of these are the truth. Another has aptly said: "The principle of Independent assemblies leads to latitudinarianism, which allows of every true's will and tries no one's conscience.

We have been called into the "fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord," and it will be noted that in the beginning of the epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle recognizes the oneness of the saints by addressing-not only the Corinthians, but "all that in every place call on the name of cur Lord Jesus Christ." (Chapter 1:2.) The seven letters to the assemblies in Asia (Rev. 2 and 3) are quoted to support Independency but at the end of each we read, "Let him hear what the Spirit sayeth unto the churches," shewing the oneness existing, each letter being the word of the Lord to the whole. The only "central authority" needed is the Lord. He is not the bond of a local meeting only, but the bond of true fellowship for all His people. Independency has lost sight of this largely and such have little before them but local fellowship with only local responsibilities.

May we not say, therefore, there is still only one choice betwezn God's foundation for fellowship and man's expediency? An unknown writer has said: "Nothwithstanding these limitations, which are the result of the frailty and fallibility common to us all we have necessarily to own a circle or bond of fellowship, and the discipline connected with it, if we would be free from the charge of real independency. And independency is not of God, but always and everywhere against Him, It is to make the members of the one body say to each other, "we have no need of you" and to

<sup>(8\*)</sup> What is God's path for His people? by A. B Miller.

deny the unity of the Spirit which should pervade the body. The more we lament and refuse sectarianism which exists, the more we are compelled and shall rejoice to own the body of Christ wherever possible. And this bond or circle of fellowship while not "the body" furnishes us with the means of owning this in a truthful and holy way, so far as the state of ruin in which the church is, permits it to be done. With love to all Christ's own—with an open door for the reception of all according to the conditions of truth and holiness, such a circle is not sectarian, but a protest against it.

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

No one contends for the expression, "circle of fellowship" an expression those who more recently have espoused the cause of Independency, have deridingly used. The so-called exclusives would gladly disavow the words or adopt another expression, so long as we can express what is necessary for godly fellowship and discipline, in a day of wide spread departure from truth and increase of lawlessness.

But are there not clearly defined *circles* of fellowship with so-called "Open" brethren, such as: Independent Open\* then, the circle refusing this extreme position; and the "Needed Truth" party or parties?

<sup>\*</sup> See letter appendix, page 55.

#### **Exclusives-So-Called**

It must be sorrowfully admitted that the ranks of the exclusive fellowship have been sadly serrated by division during the intervening years; but of late God has exercised many hearts and as a result of confession, humiliation and prayer, many have been led to own that no division can be justified save that of 1848. Mistakes have been many, since we all have our limitation, but it is useless to excuse or justify seeking to place blame at this late day. Better by far say as Daniel, "We have sinned" and acknowledging that our general condition has brought down the chastening hand of God upon us, seeking of Him a right way, loving as brethren, being courteous and pitiful, ready to respect one another's consciences, and walk together in the unity of the Spirit, without sacrificing truth. Can we doubt, that the desire evinced during the past few years, to heal breaches, remove misunderstandings and walk together in the Spirit's unity, is of God? Shall we then refuse to listen to the Lord's voice? Did He not die "to gather together in one," and was not His prayer (John 17) for manifest unity?

What is there to scripturally keep apart those who acknowledge the same divine principles, refusing Independency, and are careful to maintain the holiness of God's house today? Why should Satan be allowed to frustrate our being gathered together once more in one? Rigid ecclesiasticism has wrought sad havoc among those so highly favored, with a deeper knowledge of the truth. Let us ever remember "Knowledge puffeth up but love edifieth." Outwardly, we may be correct in our position and glory over our brethren, but where is the spirit of the One who humbled Himself to death in such an attitude? "Let each esteem other better than themselves" is the exhortation of Scripture.

## Is There a Remedy?

Shall we give up *principles* we believe to be of God, because we have failed in *practice?* This remedy would be worse than the condition engendered by our failure. Independency can never be a panacea for all the ills of so-called brethren.

In Great Britain and America\* during the past decade there has been a gracious work of the Spirit, drawing together brethren long estranged by ecclesiastical differences, with the happy result of a more united testimony. As lately as 1926 this gracious work was seen in London, England; apropos of this a brother wrote:

"The Lord heard us. It was a solemn meeting—not a jarring note throughout the two hours-a solemn, but blessed meeting. To *faith* the division which had kept apart in walk, those who were of the one body was ended. The ending of it was His work, blessed be His dear Name! Deep tears flowed down the cheeks of His people and the humiliation was real. It was a solemn meeting long to be remembered. And so on. There is no more—and—brethren but the Lord's dear people-it took us back 100 years."

Why should not this gracious work extend and continue, so that those who seek to carry out the same principles and maintain the fundamentals of Christianity, be re-united on the blessed ground that the body is one? Some, there have been, who have sought to hinder this by informing us—without scriptural authority, that healing must be individual! The late W. Kelly in a letter of late date wrote: "A notion prevails that reunion must be individual. It is a modern thought at issue with our past convictions and actions. Where does Scripture lay down anything of that sort? It does show us the principles of collective sins met collectively, individual, individually. We have dealt

<sup>\*</sup> See Appendix, "Extracts from Elizabeth letter."

individually and rightly, with individual seceders, or with one emerging from a sect. But grace handled the truth in another spirit when a rupture came in, however sadly, among those occurred. In Jersey C. I. where trouble occurred, J.N.D. in concurrence with brethren in London drew up a letter exhorting saints of both meetings then divided and breaking bread separately, to receive one another and meet together as before . . . No man of weight then doubted that reunion 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 in gathering His own in one."

Of course, where individuals or companies refuse any overtures, or take the ground of "we are right and you are wrong," "we only have the Lord's table," or "you left divine ground and must come to us," they must necessarily bear the responsibility of a continued divided condition. But where there is common confession, and without seeking to apportion blame, saints go down together saying, "we have sinned," there is necessarily a return to the original point of departure, and a return to the Spirit's unity.

A recent pamphlet circulated\*, proposed-as a panacea for all ecclesiastical ills, another party, whose banner shall be 2 Tim. 2-22. The writer informs us (Scripture does not) that the assemblies in Asia "had abandoned the truths and principles of the assembly which form the only endorsed testimony to God's purpose in this age." But 30 years after Paul wrote to Timothy, (in Rev. 2 & 3) the Lord evidently had not given them up! Paul lived to see the declension set in and the partial break up of that which had

<sup>\*</sup> Second Timothy, Paul's principles of walk, fellow-ship and ministry. R. LeB. Daniel.

been such a bright witness in the world, but failure can never annul the truth and divine principles never change, therefore the apostle reminds Timothy of that which he had heard and learned and exhorts to continuance in them. Our esteemed writer speaks constantly of "a testimony." In this connection it is well to remember the words of beloved J. N. D. that brethern were a testimony to nothing save the ruin of the professing church!

We must remember that 2 Timothy was written for *individual* guidance in a day of disorder, and *Timothy* is told to follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, in which path he would find companionship; "those who call upon the Lord out of pure heart." There is no thought of a *new assembly position* as the writer states in the following words: "The division (?) having destroyed that particular oneness of walk and fellowship which God had asked as a testimony to the truth of the one body." And surely it is late in the day (on the eve of the Lord's return, as we are), to establish a *new* fellowship!

To this I would add in closing some remarks from Synopsis 2 Tim. (JND) "Discipline for individual fault is not the subject here, nor the restoration of souls in an assembly, that has in part, lost its spirituality, but a line of conduct, for the individual Christian in respect of that which dishonors the Lord in anyway.

"God may gather the faithful together. It is grace on His part; it is His mind. But *individual responsiblity remains;* and feeble though it may be, wherever it is possible according to God, but responsibility to preserve the divine character of Christianity, in our walk, and to respond to the revelation we have received of His nature and will"

Much more might be added, but alma'y the writer has exceeded what was first intended. May the One, who in infinite love and grace, died, "to gather together in one," bind hearts together in happy, holy unity.

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen."

#### APPENDIX

## LETTERS ON THE SUBJECT OF FELLOWSHIP

#### A Letter on Intercommunion

It is well to be established in divine principles: they never alter, so that whatever period of their history the saints may find themselves, they have certain principles and truths on which they can act in the sure word of God, though it may need spiritual discernment, and above all communion with the mind of Christ, to use them.

The house of God being in disorder, the man of God has to consort with those who are true to the character of the house, and with them to follow righteousness; i.e., that is conduct suited to the house, but it is when these gather together that they have not only to wait on the Lord, as having faith in His presence with them, however dark the day may be, but also have to act in the truth of Christ's body and members one of another, counting on the spirit who formed the unity of the body to be the power for the supply of grace from the Head to His members, whether

for approach or for ministry. There are gifts, and there may be ability to minister, but the fact of there being one body in Christ would prevent any assumption, and lead each to act in the unity of the body; the sensibilities of the Head would then be felt and impressed on the members, and love would have its place as the uniting bond of peace. I may not be able to point out. how the whole body is affected by the action of saints who form part of it in one locality any more than I could point out the last ripple of water and how far it is removed from the place of disturbance, but as surely as there is one body, and that body is Christ's body, united to Him by one Spirit, so surely must an infection in one part for good or evil be felt through the whole, though there will be more sensibility where the Spirit is honored and the truth acted upon.

Such a fact must of necessity, if its truth be acknowledged, exclude from the fellowship of the saints in any locality that which is inconsistent with holiness and truth. It may be but two or three who gather to the Lord and seek to maintain that which is due His name, but if they acknowledge the fact of there being one body, they would act accordingly in the consciousness that their exclusion of evil and their maintenance of holiness and truth is in view of the whole body, though only those who gather in holiness and truth may acknowledge their action. What is called "open fellowship" is not based on the truth of the one body; not that it is denied in terms, but it is treated as a doctrine, and those who seek to be exclusive of evil in their fellowship are said to gather to the doctrine of one body. Of such gathering together, I never heard. It is further alleged that assemblies in various localities are independent one of another, and this is justified by adopting a revised translation of Eph. 2:21! They render the verse, "In whom each several building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord." That is, the whole will be complete in glory, but meanwhile there are independent assemblies, and these are justified by a false rendering. This has well been described as "a blunder affecting the whole doctrine of the church, the absence of unity being ostentatiously put forward in the epistle consecrated to its establishment." The acceptance of independent assemblies, or several buildings (not material of course) has resulted in this, that defilement or practice may be in one assembly intercommunion with it may be allowed, provided those coming from the defiled assembly show no outward marks of contamination. Thus, while there might be the avoidance, in an assembly, which allows open fellowship, of evil doctrine or practice, yet the truth of the one body not being acted upon, it opens its doors to those coming from an infected assembly, and allows fellowship with them if they show no outward sign of evil in doctrine or practice.

Would any responsible member of a household admit within its doors a person who came from a house where there was infection, provided the person, as yet, showed no symptoms of the disease? Let the fact that all believers are not only God's house, but are one body in Christ have its full weight with any two or three gathered to the Lord's name and they will maintain that the order of God's honor and fellowship of the members of Christ's body is imperative with them, and that intercommunion could only be with assemblies who hold to truth and holiness.

Nothing has had more power in separating saints- from evil than the knowledge there is one body; now it would seem there is an inclination to accept so-called broader views of fellowship, and there is a tendency to use the necessity for *separation* from vessels of dishonor, in the pres-

ent ruined state of things, apart from its connection with the truth which *unites*, in fact of their being one body in Christ. May this fact have more power with us so there may be no allowance of looseness in fellowship on the one hand, nor of the tendency to dislocation on the other, but the endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace.

-Quartus.

## COPY OF LETTER RE-INTERCOMMUNION

Minneapolis, Minn., April 6, 1930.

Beloved Brother:

The correspondence which passed between the gathering in —— and brethren in —— (known as Independent), and your letter relative thereto. I have read carefully; and as you invite me to "freely and fully" criticize I will seek to do so in the fear of the Lord.

We are, I am sure, of one mind in desiring the peace and prosperity of the Lord's people, and desire to promote unity in the gatherings. We are agreed that the recent sorrowful upheaval has exercised many as to our relationship toward other circles of brethren and I trust eliminated much of the party spirit which existed in this country. Many today are genuinely perplexed and distressed as ta the Lord's path amid the ruin of that which was once a blessed witness to the truth, "there is one body," so that it behooves us "to seek of Him a right way for us, and for our little ones." (Ezra 8:21).

It is scarcely necessary to again refer to details of the 1848 sorrowful division, these are contained in a recent pamphlet by Hamilton Smith, "Open hrethren, their principles and practices."\* We believe our brethren today are loyal to the person of our Lord and are careful to maintain sound doctrine. Their godliness, evangelistic energy, and ability to minister the word is conceded. The one question needing solution today, and this is raised by the correspondence between an?

is-it seems to me-IS THERE ANY BARRIER TO AMALGAMATION with the so-called Independent brethren?

Many disclaim amalgamation, but it can easily be shown that this must inevitably be the result of what is now advocated, viz: intercommunion. Union and merging

<sup>\*</sup> Obtainable of Loizeaux Brothers, New York.

seems the order of the day, and we are in danger of being caught in the current,. little realizing, perhaps, what may result. A fair and impartial statement of the fundamental difference between the so-called "open brethren" and ourselves is given in a recent pamphlet, written in defense of their position, by G. H. Lang, "The Local Assembly." On page 4, he says: "Here then is the difference: Open brethren hold that the Lord intends each assembly to stand and act for itself, according to His word, directly responsible to Himself, having to deal only with individuals presenting themselves for communion; neither responsible for nor bound by the church action of another assembly, but testing this by the Word when an individual therefrom presents himself, otherwise leaving it alone. Whereas Exclusive brethren hold that all assemblies together form an outward and visible unity, and that consequently the receiving or rejecting of a person by one assembly is binding upon all assemblies."

I t must be conceded that these principles are diametrically opposite and if amalgamation means the fusion of two foreign elements, then no other word could more fittingly be used to designate what some propose. The principle advocated by our dear "Open" brethren in 1848. and endorsed today is "Association with evil does not necessarily defile." You remember perhaps George Mul-lers letter to J. G. Deck, 1878. "We have received persons these 16 years who came from persons preaching "DAM-NABLE HERESIES; but we examined them, and as we found them sound or not in foundation truth, so they were were received or rejected. \*\*\* 2 John 11, is sufficient answer to this. Of course, if our Independent brethren were prepared to repudiate these principles, the door might well be open to communion, but under existing circumstances one fails to see a godly ground upon which we can fellowship, since their advocated principles must necessarily lead to looseness, and are destructive to discipline.

"Can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). Especially upon that which appears to be a vital principle, affecting the holiness of God's house. Are we prepared-for the sake of a wider circle of fellowship to give up principles believed to be of God, and acted upon since 1848? I trust not! Much as we love our brethren and would cesire to walk with them, the Lord's approval must be our first care.

<sup>\*\* &</sup>quot;Statement for examination as to fellowship with Open Brethren" F. IV. G.

It seems to me that in such a grave matter, with farreaching effects, only a general calling together for brotherly conference-(as was done in Elizabeth in June, 1923) could meet the case, but it seems we have reached a condition analogous to Judges, when "every man did that which was right in his own eyes," and thus consciences are violated,, saints distressed, and a state of division in the gathermgs engendered.

You are, I doubt not, right in condemning the sectarian spirit rife among those known as "Exclusive" brethren, and for many years one has felt our spiritual pride must bring down the Lord's hand upon us. There has been also a growing disposition to receive no Christian to break bread, unless definitely coming from a "meeting within our own circle," as you say, so that "position" and not "condition" has become the one essen-

tial. Cannot we judge all this in the presence of God, confessing our failure, and seeking afresh His face, loving our brethren with a pure heart fervently (while perhaps unable to accept their ecclesiastical position) and following the things which make for peace and the things whereby one may edify another?

Dear brother Rideout wrote, just before his departure: "WC should consider our brethren's consciences and wait on them, and we should guard against lowering the tone of the meeting by having it understood that almost anyone would be received, or large number of unexercised persons coming in. This would apply to those who are leaders in a meeting with which we are not in fellowship and which would result in confusion and disorder."

Hoping to hear further from you as to these questions.

With sincere love in our coming Lord,

J. W. H. Nichols

Elizabeth, N. J., July 20, 1929.

#### Beloved Brother:

I appreciate much, your kindness in forwarding me a copy of letter sent to your dear brother, and sincerely wish I could say, it cleared my mind of the apprehension caused by the recention of the brother. who has lately ministered at \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_. I feel sure dear brother, we both desire the peace, prosperity, and unity of the people of God, and that whatever be our personal conviction, I trust we would not arecinitate anything that would cause distress among them.

Please then, bear with me if I express freely to you my nersonal conviction, and be assured I do not write in a dictatorial spirit, but with heartfelt desire, that there may be unanimity in the gatherings regarding our attitude toward brethren beloved, who are in (what you speak of as) the "Independent position."

First, I would disarm your mind of any idea that their godliness or ability to minister the word is questioned, Who are we to assume a position of "I am holier than thou?" Our place is surely in the dust before God, as we think of present day conditions. But, we must not allow our vision to be beclouded by side issues; there are many gifts in the assembly today, whose ministry we are deprived of because they choose to walk in a path contrary to the word of God.

May I now, briefly refer to what has led many to the Independent position?

In this country, over thirty years ago, and about five years later in England, the question of fellowship with our brethren known as "open" was freely discussed. It was generally conceded, that association with the Christ dishonoring doctrines taught by B. Newton (which led to the 1848 separation, could no longer be charged against them, but it was plainly demonstrated that the principle advocated in the "letter of the ten" was still widely advocated and practiced, and as a consequence, it was felt brethren could not happily amalgamate. Particulars of this, you no doubt are conversant with, they are given in the "Pittsburgh Letter" dated July, 1894. and New York letter June 1893.\*

In England the movement was largely sponsored by brothers Mace and Heath, and the former-referring to a conference held at Devonshire House, London, says:

"At a conference in London 20 year's ago, it was suggested by those responsible, that in asking Christians to come together, it was not with any thought of fixing blame, here or there, nor for an amalgamation scheme for uniting various fragments, but IGNORING the uncalled for divisions of the past, we should return to the scriptural principles and practices acted upon early in the 19th century, apply them not to those known as brethren only. but to the whole church of God. brethren of our Lord. This would perpetuate the gracious action of the Spirit, to which we all owe so much, and thus continue the "Apostles' doctrine and fellowship." Looking back over subsequent years IT CANNOT BE SAID THAT THE COKFERENCE WAS A GREAT SUCCESS FOR THE SIMPLE REASON THAT THE PROPOSXLS HAVE NOT MATERIALIZED." Divine Fellowship, Page 31

You will notice our brother speaks of "IGNORING" the past happenings but there could surely be no return to former conditions, without a common confession, self judgment and humiliation. This there has not been in a general way.

The net result of all that took place in the way of conference, has been further division, and instead of healing breaches, further dis-unity.

I think you will admit that "INDEPENDENCY" has never been, nor can be of God, one might ask "Independent of whom, independent of what?" Yet there are those like our brother in question who adopt this position and consequently feel at liberty to fellowship wheresoever they choose to go, they becoming supreme judges of the spiritual condition of such gatherings, quoting 2 Tim. 2:X.

<sup>\*</sup> See pages 58 and 62.

If as some say, they are not connected with any circle of fellowship but independent, then they come under no jurisdiction, and there is an entire end of discipline, and with discipline at an end, you have necessarily lost true assembly ground.

On the other hand there exists today a pronounced circle of fellowship distinct from the open brethren, yet often freely fellowshipping known as "Independents," both in this country and in England, and one of their number told me recently, they acted upon 1 Cor. 11:28, "Let a man examine HIMSELF," emphasizing the word "himself." Could a looser fellowship be maintained?

Let UP, dear brother, he careful that we do not seek union, at the expense of unity. I wrote a brother in liberty to receive, whomsoever they please, it must be remembered, we have responsibility toward other gatherings, and that in receiving, we receive for all, with whom we fellowshin, if the truth "there is one body" be recognized. This in ----, you seemingly did not' take into account, your letter referring only to what some locally decided, as though this was sufficient! Surely, in such a grave matter as intercourse with saints from whom we have walked apart for so many years, nothing less than a calling together in conference and brotherly confidence, and prayer, could bring satisfactory results. Thus only can we keep the unity of the Spirit, in the uniting bond of peace" and be preserved from further division. That our dear "open" brethren and our "Independent" friends are not of one mind, is evidenced by the following, taken from a booklet by Alexander Marshall: He says: "The Believers Magazine in advocating what is known as the 'close' view of fellowship adds 'Some who once owned and practiced this as the way of God, now nickname it 'exclusiveism.' All this and much more has been spoken and written,, with a view of setting aside the order of Cod, to make it easy for lawless persons. and division makers to get a foothold in the assemblies of believers, gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus'." Alexander Marshall comments, "Surely this is not only a case of judging motives. but slandering those who believe that the 'open' principle of reception and no other is the scriptural way."

But I must bring this lengthy letter to a close, shall be glad of a hrotherly interchange of thought, and may write more later.

Yours, with truest affection in the Lord,

Signed: J. W. H. NICHOLS

To our brethren in Christ, in England and elsewhere gathered with us to the Name of our Lord Jesus.

#### Beloved Brethren:

In view of the evident misapprehension on the part of many brethren in this country and elsewhere, as to the meaning of the Plainfield circular of last July (which we are free to admit was imperfectly expressed), it was deemed advisable to have a conference of brethren in these parts, to consider the subject, and express a judgment, as to the result of the Plainfield meeting, and the true meaning and object of the circular.

Accordingly, such a conference was held on the afternoon of May 30.

It was agreed, that intercommunion with those in fellowship with Bethesda or open brethren-so-called-was NOT contemplated, so long as "The letter of the ten," with its evil principles was unjudged and allowed to stand. At the same time, godly persons, unintelligent as to their associations, ought not to be denied fellowship amongst us should they desire it.

This action is found necessary from the fact, that certain laboring brethren from amongst us, have construed the matter differently, by fellowshipping with "open brethren," practically denying there has been occasion for division in the past, and assuming that the evil principles of Bethesda have been really judged, which we should be only too happy to learn, but of which we are sorry to say there exists no evidence.

We also feel that we have allowed ourselves to go too far in fellowshiping certain persons from among them, giving thereby cause for the alarm which some have taken.

Humbled through the events which have transpired among us of late years, we sincerely desire to increase in love toward all our brethren in Christ, whatever ecclesiastical position they occupy. At the same time, we realize that these are no times to grow slack, but contrariwise. increasing in vigilance, remembering the promise and the warning "Behold I come quickly, hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

Signed: E. G. Mauger, S. Brooklyn.

James Brown, New York.

F. W. Grant, Plainfield.

W. S. Heron, S. Brooklyn.

Geo. Bezer, S. Brooklyn.

John F. Gilmore, Brooklyn.

H. E. Lampe, Rutherford, N. J.

C. Jouard, New York.

Julius Overbury, Orange, N. J.

A. McGilchrist, New York.

James Manahan, Jersey City.

G. H. McCandless, Elizabeth, N. J.

James Welch, Elizabeth, N. J.

W. S. Rolston, Elizabeth, N. J.

T. O. Loizeaux, Plainfield, N. J.

Paul J. Loizeaux, Plainfield, N. J.

## EXTRACTS FROM MEMORANDUM OF CON-FERENCE AT ELIZABETH, NEW JERSEY, REGARDING FELLOWSHIP WITH SO-CALLED "CLANTON" BRETHREN

The conference was held at Elizabeth, New Jersey, on each day from Monday, June 11, to Tuesday 19, 1923, inclusive.

The first day, Monday, June 11, was entirely devoted to prayer, and the first part of each session was taken up in the same way.

Tuesday was devoted to a study of the Word of God, bearing upon the principles of the nature and order of the Assembly, with special reference to present conditions and needs. After this, on Wednesday, the history of past exercises and divisions was taken up with special reference to the development of the principles and doctrines which have caused so much sorrow.

There was the freest and fullest discussion of these matters, and ample opportunity was given

for everyone present to express his difficulties and exercises. We are thankful for the spirit of forbearance and courtesy manifested in all this discussion.

Without going into further detail, we give the following:

- 1. We are in accord as to the principles of Scripture regarding fellowship and the path of faith in a day of failure (Eph. 4: 1-16; 2 Tim. 2: 19-22). But we recognize that in our sad divisions and separations God has had much to say to us all which we have been slow to heed.
- 2. We recognize with thankfulness that for the past fourteen years there has been an increased turning of heart, and desire for a righteous healing of the breach which has so long been our common sorrow and shame. This has resulted in a steady movement, not confined to any one section or country, amongst individuals, gatherings and servants of the Lord, towards a reconciliation on the basis of the principles of God's Word. But we regret that this does not as yet include all meetings.
- 3. While all details as to the manner of this coming together, as well as of the doctrines in question, have not had the approval of all, and as it is well known that matters are still in a state of transition, it is our united conviction and desire that this work should not be hindered (1 Cor. 1: 10; Rom. 15: 5-7); but that godly care, patience and prayer should govern a continuance of this work of healing (Neh. 4: 6-9, 16-23). Our love desires and hopes that through God's goodness a complete reconciliation may be effected, according to righteousness, while waiting for the coming of our Lord.
- 4. In pursuance of this object we all feel that we should not fall short in our desire for a complete recognition of the principles of God's Word

as to full organic unity of assembly fellowship and a determination, by God's grace, to seek to secure this in a practical way, in actual intercourse, brotherly confidence, ministry, and letters of commendation to and from all gatherings everywhere which are seeking, or shall seek, thus to maintain together these precious truths. And for the furtherance of this work we hope that responsible brethren will use diligence to inform and lead on individuals and companies, so that all may arrive at a Scriptural unity.

- 5. It has been a great sorrow to know that the gatherings of some of our beloved brethren in Great Britain and New Zealand have not felt clear fully to acquiesce, due possibly to failure on our part to inform them and to counsel with them. It is our earnest desire to assure these dear brethren of our abiding love, and to express the earnest hope and prayer that a right way will be found for the continuance of a fellowship which has gone on unbroken for so many years.
- G. We have also been made glad by the reaching forth of the hands of our beloved "Bexhill" brethren, both in America, and abroad, and to them we desire to express the same love and the same earnest hopes which we have given utterance to above.

Frank Allaben, New York City
James Arthur, New Orange Park, Kenilworth, N. J.
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## Extracts from Pittsburgh, Pa., Letter

## REASONS FOR OUR POSITION TOWARD OPEN BRETHREN

### Beloved Brethren:

With no desire to re-open a painful subject, or to disturb the minds of the Lord's dear people, we believe it to be our duty to lay before you certain considerations regarding association with, or reception of, Open Brethren so called.

It is our conviction that we cannot in righteousness, or true grace, have any association with these brethren. Our reasons, briefly given are as follows:

The original cause of the whole trouble has never been judged by Bethesda. There have been denials from individuals that the meaning put upon "the Letter of the Ten" was ever intended, but Bethesda herself has never spoken as to it, never judged nor withdrawn that which has deeply wounded the consciences of multitudes of Cod's people.

But not only does the past remain unjudged; we are compelled to believe that the principles then declared are still held. In proof of this we call attention to a circular received during the past winter signed by a number of leaders of long standing among Open Brethren in England. In this paper intercommunion with gatherings "where fundamental evil is tolerated," is distinctly disavowed; on the other hand, Mr. Wright, one of the signers of this circular, in the following letter declares the reverse:

"New Orphan Houses, Ashley Down, Bristo!, 19th Dec. 1883.

Dear Sir:

"In reply to your inquiry, the ground on which we receive to the Lord's table is, soundness in the faith, and consistency of life of the individual believer. We should not refuse to receive one who we had season to believe was personally sound in the faith and consistent in life merely because he, or she, was in fellowship with a body of Christions who would allow Mr. Newton to minister among them; just on the same principle that we should not refuse a person equally sound in faith and consistent. in life simply because he, or she came from a body of Christians amongst whom the late Mr. J. N. Darby had ministered; though on account of much more recent unsound teachings of the *latter*, we might well feel, a *priori*, greater hesitation.

I am, faithfully yours, (Signed), James Wright.

These two statements would be irreconcilable, were they not explained, as by a labouring brother among them in this country, to refer to two kinds of reception: where the assembly is recognized as clear, a person would be received from or commended to it by letter; where this is not the case, he is received simply as an individual, without being required to break with the defiled meeting.

We thus see that while intercommunion is in *NAME* denied it is in *FACT* allowed, and it is with facts and principles, not names, we have to do.

It is clear then that the principles of "the Letter of the Ten" remain unchanged among them. Do any question this, we can but quote from a circular letter from England recently sent out by our bro. Jno. James, of Montreal:

"The whole question as to fellowship and separation from evil lies in this-the state of the in my heart, condone evil or not? heart. Do I that is the point. It is not a question of physical fellowship, but of spiritual. If I faithfully bear testimony against an evil doctrine, I am not defiled by communication with those who hold it. You cannot have fellowship with, and bear faithful testimony against, an evil teaching or practice, at the same time. I cannot be defiled with what my heart and conscience rejects at the same time. Therefore Scripture says, 'God . . . looketh at the heart, not as man seeth.' The mistake Mr. Darby made was this: he inaugurated a system in which physical fellowship or intercourse was defined as defiling, apart from the condition of soul, or state of the heart, altogether. If I broke bread with an assembly in which was an evil teacher, I was defiled, notwithstanding I had faithfully opposed and exposed the evil teaching all through; and went there for that purpose, viz.,

to rescue my brethren. We do not so learn Christ. Of course, if I carelessly broke bread there, that is another matter; but where an assembly is defiled, it will not submit to faithful teaching in its midst, and will turn out the faithful one.""

Let us place by the side of this the statement of "the Letter of the Ten." We ask which is the stronger of the two, and whether in the face of this any can conscientiously say that "the Letter of the Ten" does not still represent their principles?

## Statement of the Letter of the Ten

"Even supposing that those who inquired into the matter had come to the same conclusion, touching the amount of positive error therein contained, this would not have guided us in our decision respecting individuals coming from Plymouth. For, supposing the author of the tracts were fundamentally heretical, this would not warrant us in rejecting those who come from under his teaching, until we were satisfied that they had understood and imbibed views essentially subversive of foundation truth."

We can only say that, had we been sure of what this letter from England now affirms, before the meeting two years ago, the Plainfield circular would not have been sent out. That circular, violated by some, was confessedly but con-

<sup>\*</sup>Let the reader note that if one has but spoken against evil doctrines in an assembly (and it is fundamental evil which is in question), he is free to have fellowship there; then judge of "the condition of soul or state of the heart" of him who can do so. The word of God says, "Evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. xv. 33) "Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. ii. 19). And "A wise man feareth and departeth from evil" (Prov. xiv. 16).

ditional on the evidence given us being found true. It called attention to the fact that the past was not clear, but the belief was entertained that the present principles and practices of Open Brethren were changed, and it was hoped they would be led on further to judge the past, and to settle other questions still remaining. So far from this they have but ignored the past, reiterated their former principles, and thus proven that "as their fathers did, so do they." We are therefore in honesty bound to say that we were misled by statements made us at the Plainfield meeting, and that with our present knowledge that circular could not have gone forth.

We must therefore repeat that we desire it to be fully and finally understood that we can have no fellowship except as they forsake the principles above stated. As to those who are ignorant of these questions, our duty will be, in the love and grace which should ever characterize the people of God, to instruct them and expect them to act accordingly.

We need hardly say that it is only from a sense of duty we thus write. Would that all the Lord's people were united, but it must be in righteousness.

May the Lord touch the hearts of His beloved people that we may be all led to His feet, to enjoy His grace and maintain His truth.

Signed at a conference held at Pittsburgh, Pa., July 19th to 23rd, and at Dunkirk, N. Y., July 26th to Aug. 2nd, 1894.

S. Ridout

P. J. Loizeaux

G. H. McCandless

A. M. Scott

. F. W. Grant

B. C. Greenman

F. Tinley

and Fourteen Others.

#### LETTER ON SERVICE

#### Dear Brother:

You ask me for something clear as to our holding aloof from the work of system-by "our" you mean those who gather in the Lord's name and are seeking to hold fast His work and not deny His name-those who seek to walk—"in truth." It would be easy for me to say: If a Christian has realized that Jesus suffered without the gate, (that is outside the center of a system of worldly ordinances) and if he has gone forth unto Him without the camp, how can he fellowship that which goes on within the camp? But a difficulty arises in the minds of many, because of the fact that-like Eldad and Medad, who prophesied in the camp, and of whom Joshua said, My lord Moses forbid them-there are those who preach the gospel, and through whom souls are converted while they remain still in the camp.

Those who have this difficulty are those who have the conversion of souls much at heart, but who-1 judge—look at it more from their own feelings than from being in fellowship with the love of God and its outflow, according to His own glory and His righteous grace. Hence, it is not merely that they rejoice that Christ is preached, though it be in the camp (and who would forbid them to preach?) but they seek to have fellowship with it, and often accept the idea of so-called wider views, than the narrow path of obedience and separation to Christ permits. With some, service is put before communion—Martha before Mary, and they own they prefer Martha to Mary! To such, I can only commend the passage, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (I Sam. 15.22).

There are doubtless some who have found meetings of saints ready to their hand, and have taken their place in them without much exercise as to going forth &to Him without the camp. For their sakes, I would say a word as to the character of the camp. From Exodus 19.2, it is evident that it signified the encampment of a people whom God had redeemed out of Egypt, with whom He was about to enter into covenant relationship, as one may say it was an enclosure in which people, owned of God to be His, over whom He spread His cloud for a covering, rested. Now, whatever the people thought or did that was contrary to these gracious actions of God, His taking them to be His people was in truth and faithfulness. He cannot be anything but what he is for He is God. On their part there was neither truth or faithfulness as to their place with God and hence when Moses had gone up to God in

the mount, they made a golden calf and set it in the camp, exchanged their glory (for God was their glory) into the similitude of an ox that eateth hay . . . What took place with Israel was this, that in connecting Jehovah's name with the work of their hands, they associated His name with the idolatry and festivals of Egypt, from which they had been delivered, and this attempt to mix what was human, "the work of their own hands," with what was divine, now gave its character to the camp, instead of Jehovah's gloru.

What Moses did in this state of things was to pitch a tent (the tabernacle was not yet made) without the camp "afar off from the camp." Though it was a refuge for all who sought the Lord, yet it was there for the whole congregation for Moses called it, "the tabernacle of the congregation." or tent of meeting. It was for every one who sought Jehovah apart from the ways of the camp.

What has taken place in Christendom is the mixing in some way of the human element, the leaven of human thought and action, with the truth of Christ, so that it seems to be the truth. The effort in Paul's day was to go on with. or go back to, Judaism, (the man rejected by God) instead of seeking companionship with Him who suffered without the gate--as the accepted Man has gone within the veil. In our day, this has succeeded and Christianity has become systematized by man and Christ's holy name has been linked with human arrangement, "the work of their own hands."

The effect is a great slighting of the Spirit of God. He came as a witness to the judgment of the world! as well as its sinful condition, and He came to bear witness of God's acceptance of Christ in resurrection and to glorify Him.

If the human elements which joined aforetime to crucify Christ are acknowledged as having part in Christianity, it must grieve and slight the Spirit of Godhuman energy supplanting the energy of the Spirit. Now, if our eyes are open to see the true character of this mixture of woolen and linen (Deut. 22.11) Christ himself becomes to us the tabernacle to which we repair without the camp, and if he is the tabernacle to us, how can we promote fellowship with those who abide in the camp? If they prophesy there, instead of going out to the tabernacle, we do not seek to oppose or forbid, but we cannot have fellowship with the principles of the camp.

There is one more point which is important. Going without the camp though it be to Him, is not realizing in

communion what we possess in Him, and if our souls are occupied with merely taking a right position, there will be the tendency to seek for something elsewhere, because they are not drawing from the fullness of the Head. Colossians meets the difficulty, showing also that one who does not hold the Head seeks elsewhere, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind. It is the fleshly mind that would add the element of the world to Christ. In growing up to the Head, believers have no need to recoguize the worldly element. No saint would look to anyone but Christ for salvation, but some do rejoice in the work of men's hands, in that which has given Christendom the character of "the camp," and fine buildings, beautiful singing, eloquence and the adaptation of God's truth to men's ideas are found there.

That grace should override man's failure, and that God should use the prophesying of Eldad and Medad in the camp for the conversion of souls, is no warrant for one who has gone forth unto Him to return thither, or have fellowship with its ways, though one can rejoice in God's grace going out, in spite of man's failure; but the real place to appreciate grace and to grow up into Christ in all things is found in holding to the Head, and drawing from his fullness. "If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth, let them return unto thee but return not thou to them." Jer. 15.19.

The beloved writer of the foregoing letter passed into the presence of the Lord February, 1930, at the ripe age of  $100~{\rm years}$ .

J. W. H. N.

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