

FELLOWSHIP  
AND  
ECCLESIAL PEACE

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CHAS. P. WAUCHOPE

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of that  
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## FELLOWSHIP AND ECCLESIAL PEACE.

### PREFACE.

During 1924 the Adelaide Ecclesia mailed to advertised addresses of Recorders and Ecclesias throughout the world, 10,000 "Appeals" and "Brochures," drawing attention to the sad existing state of the Brotherhood. Many encouraging responses came as a result.

In 1925 the writer accompanied by Sister Wauchope, toured the British Empire, supplementing the Peace Efforts of The Adelaide Ecclesia. Their route took them through North New Zealand, Canada, a small part of U.S.A. and Britain; also Egypt and The Holy Land. Though this was intended as a holiday tour taken for rest and health purposes, the travellers devoted themselves to the Master's work in the interests of Ecclesial Peace.

No definite doctrinal programme, other than essential Scripture truths already accepted, was introduced; the chief aim of the ambassadors being to try and cultivate a desire for brotherly harmony. To this end they devoted themselves for the creation of the right atmosphere, in bringing members of the different factions into each other's company, and talking over the means by which most of the existing chasms might be bridged.

They did not expect nor did they secure, success so far as results were concerned. They knew too well that a disease of division and disfellowship which for 40 years had torn and disrupted the Brotherhood, could not be healed quickly; and so their policy was to show where the household had erred not alone in doctrinal matters, but more in the lack of exhibiting the spirit of Christ and practising the commandment to Love one another." The work has not been in vain; no work in the Lord is ever so. We have the assurance of numerous correspondents and the splendid help of some magazines, to believe that our endeavours have not died away in sound. In most places visited there are now those who are desirous of and working towards, a harmonious household.

The accompanying treatise, though quite different from our traditional ecclesial custom in the matter of Withdrawal and Disfellowship, will serve, it is hoped, to place before its readers a view point which seeks to preserve the sanctity of fellowship and the highest standard of the brotherhood, without doing violence to any Divine principle..

Unfortunately, good reasons exist for fearing that the doctrine of Divine fellowship has been but imperfectly appreciated. And it is also true that but little literature is available on the subject. It is not too late to alter this. As a "first principle" no belief is more vital; for what are all other principles of salvation worth, unless they are based on fellowship with God, with Christ, and the Believers?

For, and on behalf of The Adelaide Ecclesia, sincerely your Brother in the Lord,

CHAS. P. WAUCHOPE

## PREFACE TO REPRINT

Since the original publishing of this booklet, much has been said, and much has been written concerning FELLOWSHIP but it is unfortunate that ECCLESIAL PEACE and INTER-ECCLESIAL PEACE seems not to have been reached, and even the standard of serenity which had formerly been attained has been sadly eroded as Ecclesias continue to fragment.

Seeing that we are now 64 years closer to our Master's advent than when this useful booklet was first issued, we have felt that the work of this loving and able brother should still be allowed, yes, encouraged to speak, even though he sleeps, and that each member of the brotherhood use the time that is left to play his/her part in trying to bring about that laudable condition of PEACE with LOVE.

We each know that before the seat of judgement we are all going to need much mercy, so we suggest that all who read this valuable work use the allotted time to extend mercy and understanding to all others, and that, in the Name of Him whom we all adore.

F.C. Porter.

For those concerned.

## FELLOWSHIP AND ECCLESIAL PEACE.

Much interest has been aroused by the Peace endeavours put forth by The Adelaide Ecclesia, and I have been requested to compile a treatise on the subject forming the title of this pamphlet.

In full recognition of the responsibility of this task, I devote myself to it with the sincere prayer that Our Most Merciful Father will add His blessing to readers and writer; so that a way out of the appalling ecclesial dilemma might be found. I simply ask that those who read it will do so carefully, with a mind sympathetic to its purpose; and, by a Scriptural analysis, prove whether it is useful as an attempt to secure ecclesial peace.

Before a just conclusion can be reached, it is essential that existing prejudices shall be set aside, because habits and associations become so established and traditional that they are generally accepted without question. On no subject did we find the Brotherhood more traditional than on the doctrine of Fellowship.

This doctrine becomes the basis of what follows; it is therefore needful to probe it, and if possible, subject it to a close and sincere investigation, so that we might learn how near we are to, or far removed from, the Divine requirements on this all-important topic.

## OUR HIGH CALLING.

As we journeyed around the ecclesias, it was too frequently observed that a conception of Fellowship in the Lord had not risen above a human level. Beginning and ending with this aspect, it is easily conceivable that treatment with "fellows" in the Lord would be likewise very human. We experienced that natural, rather than godly treatment, is meted out to those who, for reasons right or wrong, come under the ban of "disfellowship."

Such treatment is cruel, even though not intentionally so: because the real motive claimed for it is "the purity of the body." This admitted, it is nevertheless that form of zeal which Paul exhibited before his conversion. Zeal, well meant yet wrongly applied, is harmful rather

than beneficial and from this we should learn our necessary lesson. This will not be learned until we appreciate our personal relationship to the Father; and further appreciate that every brother and sister in Christ has exactly the same relationship as ourself. This sobering fact will show us our proper and correct place.

"Fellowship in the Lord" rests entirely on a Divine foundation; which is to say, that the basis of fellowship to be sound, must bear the Divine impress, and operate on Divine methods so that investigation regarding our treatment of others in the matter of fellowship will yield the unchallengable conclusion that we are doing God service and fulfilling His Will. Let it be remembered too that God is not on our side just because we have decided Him to be. Such an important conclusion requires calm, thoughtful, patient and prayerful consideration; after which it may be found that we have been, or are, fighting against God, and serving disguised impulses of our fleshly mind; in which case God is not on our side.

"Divisions" and "separations" have been made easy and become so common, that it is quite evident that simple process of creating them has been established. Paul wrote to the Corinthians in a rebukeful manner over the same thing, with this difference. They permitted those from whom they separated to break bread in the same assembly as themselves; while we modern Corinthians do not. The same rebuke stings now as then; "For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you.

These divisions, or schisms, arose because some thought their fellowship was with Paul, or Peter, or Apollos. But as it really was with those divisions were wrong; and so are ours. "Is Christ divided" has the same negative answer now as it had in Apostolic days; though this appears to have become obscured from view. Paul sought to take them back to the enduring fellowship of Jesus Christ. Let us learn that ancient lesson and get back to a full appreciation of "the high calling of God in

Christ Jesus," for this alone is at-one-ment with God, with Christ, and with the brethren wherever or whoever they are.

#### APOSTOLIC FELLOWSHIP.

When this is understood we shall be greatly aided to a proper recognition of Christian Fellowship, or more definitely stated as "Fellowship in the Lord." If we learn the basis or foundation of Apostolic fellowship, we will know that the foundation of ours is identical with theirs unless teachings exist which have altered, amended, extended, or contracted the Apostolic basis. Certainly we do find that theirs seems much briefer and less elaborate than current ones. It will be readily admitted, that if God has allowed or provided ONE basis, He would not need to supply a second or more. And further, we would also be sure that He found no occasion to alter or amend His basis, nor permit the Apostles, ancient or modern, to do so without giving some instructions to that effect. That the Bible supplies no notification of change cannot be disputed; this is in harmony with the unchangeable attributes of the Father. Nor does history or Scripture show that in Apostolic days there was any elaboration or amendment of the foundation of fellowship in the Lord. That which was sufficient for early Apostolic times was given for later days; so that if the original foundation has since been altered, it has occurred by human agency without Divine warrant. Therefore any alterations of any kind, however useful, should not be considered as part of the original basis without being fortified by a "thus saith the Lord." Nor should the modern ones (and they are quite numerous) be put forward for acceptance with the same authority as the Apostolic Basis.

This Basis was supplied by John the Apostle as the acceptable means by which fellowship could be established with God and Christ, and consequently with men and women who constitute the Brotherhood of Christ or

Household of God. The conciseness and simplicity are so sublime that modern fear has been engendered regarding its present-day suitability or sufficiency. Surely a most questionable apprehension. If some consider it desirable to augment the Apostolic Basis, there need be no objection; but let the additions not be put forward with the same demand for acceptance as the original. It is just here where great damage has been done.

Let us note the Apostle's Creed in their language. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." (1 John, 1-3.) What a simple, but what a solemn basis of fellowship!

Thus we have the "declaration" of the Apostle: — —

1. The belief forming the basis of fellowship.
2. The personnel of such fellowship.

The main essential is seen to be "fellowship with God and His Son," of those who are in harmony with the prescribed foundation of that fellowship. And it is worthy of note that wrong action has arisen concerning fraternal fellowship, due to a doubtful point of view.

'Fellowship with us' arises through fellowship with the Father and Son, and indicates that those so related are necessarily "fellows" in common; that is, "with us" or one with another" (ver. 7); not meaning that fellowship exists between us because of our association with an ecclesia, but that our relationship with the ecclesia is established because of our fellowship with God. Without this we would have none with the brethren; therefore while that with God continues, obviously that with the brotherhood also remains.

#### THE ANCIENT BASIS.

Let us consider the doctrines forming this sublime basis of fellowship, by which, first individually and then ecclesially, we have relationship with Father and Son.

'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we

looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life for the life was manifested and we have seen and bear witness and shew unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested unto us." (Ver. 1-2.)

In this "declaration" is stated belief essential to acceptance with God. It outlines the promise of the redeemer in a remote past, and certifies its fulfilment by His advent, including His suffering, sacrifice, death, and resurrection; thus repudiating the false assertions of those anti-Christians who later (2 Epistle 7), went among the brethren denying the fleshly reality of the Messiah, Redeemer. Not John only, but other disciples, were well qualified to attest to His reality, personal presence, and His message for they had for 33 years lived in His company, saw Him crucified, had heavenly assurances of His Sonship had personal proof of His resurrection and ascension, and remembered His declaration that He would "come again." These truths embody all things necessary to be believed unto salvation, and which are requisite to fellowship with God, even though so simple and few.

Thus it will be seen that what is given as a basis of fellowship is also given as the basis of salvation. Being unable to alter the latter, we are impotent to alter the first-mentioned. Therefore, while the enumerated first principles of belief are important, not less so is the greatest of all, viz., Fellowship with God and His Son. Yet how comparatively little does this all-important essential seem to be appreciated or rightly understood. Largely because of this has the modern household become disrupted. Whilst seeing and acting upon a human conception of fellowship of the brethren, the higher feature has been passed over.

The purpose of this treatise is to propagate the doctrine of fellowship with God and Christ, in which all have Part who have accepted the basal truths of salvation. We cannot too strongly show to new converts, when giving them the right hand of fellowship, that they are not

simply entering an ecclesia, but that they are being recognised as members of the household of God, who are all in fellowship with Father, Son, and brethren, because of the relationship existing through belief and baptism. If this were done our young converts would much better realize the "hope of their high calling in Christ Jesus."

Let it be remembered that fellowship in each or either of its three phases, is an independently personal matter, and that is the reason why each member of the household is responsible for his or her own conduct.

It is most necessary that all understand that we do not come into a relationship with God and Christ through becoming members of an ecclesia; but that we have fellowship with each and every member of all ecclesias through having entered into covenant relationship with God. This fellowship was optional with us, but when once it is established, then our relationship or fellowship with all other members of the Body automatically begins and continues.

#### STATEMENTS OF FAITH.

Our minds have now been informed what the basis or foundation of Apostolic faith comprised. It was belief and confession in the Messiah whom God sent in fulfilment of His pre-ordained purpose. And this belief not only went beyond His tomb, but extended to the future, when, as David's son, he will return to reign as King of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, though brief, it is a comprehensive basis of fellowship, set forth by the Apostle John as a declaration of what was requisite. It may now be asked whether, if it then was sufficient for union with Christ, by what authority has it been amplified or amended since Apostolic days?

No objection could be taken to any community publishing a statement of their faith. In our case we have several, differing in dimension and detail, put forward as "bases" of fellowship. Of human fellowship truly, but not of Divine: their variety denies them that status. As



statements of faith they are commendable, nor is it intended that they shall be dispensed with, inasmuch as they have arisen from the desire to exhibit a concrete digest of our belief. If they ended there all might be well. Where they become harmful is in the insistence that everyone in association, without any mental reservation, or "conscientious objection" (which we strive to have honoured by Caesar in military or political affairs) shall accept one of these varying statements of faith as a "basis of fellowship;" or failing to do so, are asked to regard themselves as being "out of fellowship" until their mind conforms to this human presentation of God's Word; which is a most serious state of things, for results illustrate the words of the Master, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." This arises, not from Apostolic example, but rather from ecclesial tradition and presumption.

Not only are evil consequences experienced by the objector, but one or many ecclesias may suffer also. And this, because true fellowship has been lowered from its Divine elevation for an erring human substitute. How much or how far, one brother or one ecclesia is qualified to exercise authority over fellowship of the brethren requires to be seriously considered.

To begin with let us go to the foundation of fellowship. The Apostle informs us that it is necessary to walk in the light. This every convert has done when he or she entered into relationship with God. They ceased to be children of darkness, and became children of light. This change brought us into fellowship with God, to which we attested by word and deed. The following incident which was experienced when among the ecclesias, will reveal how far good intention may go wrong. A brother who was anxious to prove me "out of fellowship," quoted 1 John 1, 7, "If we walk in the light we have fellowship with another." Naturally the question arose. Which of us is not walking in the light? He justly knew nothing adverse in me, while I believed him to be a child of light. He did not think

himself to be the culprit, but was not prepared to assert that I was. So much for the superficial reasoning which does such mischief.

#### THE ANCIENT CONFESSION OF FAITH.

The Apostle Paul expresses his basis of belief and fellowship in the following language (Rom. 10, 8-10), "The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach; because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness. and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.'

In this we have from Paul a glorious, yet simple, basis of fellowship with God, in all respects identical, except verbiage, with that of the Apostle John which has been considered. Also an act is required, both by Apostolic custom, and the precept of Christ. The deed of baptism becomes the attesting bond, without which, union with Christ and relationship with God cannot be, and fellowship is not created. But the confession of faith being made, followed by baptism, the candidate for eternal life at once is transformed into a son of light. He has walked into the light. He becomes a son of the Lord God Almighty. and is therefore in fellowship with every member of God's household, with or without their consent or approval. He has entered into a Divine fellowship after making a Divine covenant, and becomes responsible solely to God for its fulfilment. This helps us to realize that fellowship with our brethren is a divine arrangement outside of our control in regard to another.

"None can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him," from which it is inferable that, since he is unable to establish a brother's relationship with the Divine family, neither is he qualified to set it at nought. Because this aspect appears to have been neglected or overlooked, members of the heavenly family are regarded no more than those of a human institution,

in which members would have authority vested in them by Articles of Association. and would be able to suspend or cancel the fellowship of any "fellow" guilty of an offence. This is not so in the ecclesial institution, in which we become one spiritual family in Christ Jesus.

This must not be taken to mean that we should not exercise our influence for good with each other; rather is this our obligation. Where failure occurs, the strong are instructed to bear the infirmities of the weak. They are also instructed not to lord authority over one another. This accords with Paul (1 Cor. 12), where he declares that the uncomely parts of the body need more attention bestowed on them, and shows how impossible it is for the stronger to segregate the feebler. From the natural he argues to the Divine plane, and says that "God hath set the members each one of them in the body, even as it hath pleased Him," and also that "God hath tempered the body together, giving more abundant honor to that part which lacked; that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another." The whole chapter excellently illustrates the obligations of members of God's family towards each other, and should be carefully considered in the ecclesial sense. Jesus said, "No man cometh to me except the Father draw him." It cannot be over-emphasised that the impelling power of God has been the means employed to bring us into His family; nor should we under-rate the fact.

#### OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN.

This helps us to recognize where we each stand in God's sight. He has drawn us to Himself. We may not consider ourselves or others worthy of this high calling, but still it was God who drew us into relationship with Himself and Christ. We may not understand His motive, but nevertheless He had a reason for including each one in His household. Before we entered His family we had to be of the "one mind." This is the mind of Christ," not the mind of any man or ecclesia, as

is often erroneously thought. We confessed with the mouth, believed with the heart, and sealed our covenant in baptism. Having drawn us, God also accepted us in the Beloved. Thus fellowship was established with Father, with Son, and with every member of the Divine family.

We know this is true because "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs 'with Christ.'" "For as many as are led by the Spirit, these are sons of God," and so we "received the spirit of adoption." God has accepted, owned, adopted us as His sons and daughters, and allowed us to call Him, Abba, Father. To such a position as this we have been raised. We are "God's fellow-workers, God's building." Truly our fellowship is with the Father and Son. How very excellent and holy; who shall presume to interfere?

And the duration of this fellowship; once entered into, it is irrevocable this side of Christ's tribunal. He has not yet judged the household, and God will not undo it before then, for He has committed all judgment unto the Son. We, as fellow-members, are not able to even if we would, terminate our fellowship with God. Therefore neither are we able to terminate fellowship with His family, though we may withdraw our companionship from transgressors. Therefore, if unable to sever our relationship with God, how can we disclaim fellowship with other members of the same family, with whom relationship in God has, by His influence, been automatically created? Unfortunately, good reasons exist for fearing that the doctrine of divine fellowship has been but imperfectly appreciated. And it is too true also, that but little literature on the subject is available. It is not too late to alter this. As a 'first principle" no belief is more vital, for what are all other principles of salvation worth, unless they are based on fellowship with God, with Christ and the Believers?

Divine Fellowship is in contrast to, and with higher and more enduring features than, human fellowship.

However great, pleasant, or advantageous the latter may be, it terminates in death. Nor does it matter whether it be of a commercial, political, social or domestic order. All these fellowships cease. But heavenly fellowship is of God, and cannot be treated in the manner of earthly ones. Those are human, and therefore are based on temporal lines. This is Divine, and consequently eternal. To this our attachment belongs.

Being drawn by God, the converted sinner's desire is to know the way to be saved. He believes the gospel and accepts Christ; but has to pass through the "modus operandi." Therefore his mind is tested, to ascertain the correctness of his belief, for his sake; his affections are touched to see whether they have a responsive chord towards God. His confession meeting with approval, the candidate is baptized for remission of past sins. Then he enters God's family as a child of God; for God is his Heavenly Father, and he is God's adopted son. By the act of baptism he has entered into a new relationship with God. Because of his covenant he is chosen as a "fellow," and is therefore in fellowship with Father, Son, and members of the family divine.

#### DE-FELLOWSHIP.

From the act of baptism there is no return; one cannot be "un" or "dis" baptized; his vow remains, and his responsibility with it. Consequently this new relationship, this new-born fellowship, is unbreakable by himself or by another. He has been adopted by God, and espoused by Christ together with, and in the same manner as, all brethren who until Christ's disapproval, continue in relationship or fellowship as members of the heavenly circle. No other member, nor any ecclesia, qualified him for this fellowship; neither have they authority to disqualify him or cancel his fellowship. To be effective, "dis" fellowship would be to undo fraternal relationship, and replace the member back to his former state of "without God and without hope." To dis fellowship would be to reject, to cast out, to make an outcast. By Christ only "dis-fellowship" will be made.

Though these ideas may seem strange and different, reflection will show that being a Divine thing, fraternal fellowship rests on Divine grounds, and will be dealt with accordingly. Too long has it been treated as a man-made contract. The basis of salvation is the basis of fellowship, and once admitted as a fellow into the family of God, we become "joint heirs with Jesus Christ," to remain so until approval or disapproval is pronounced by Him. There is therefore great need to regard "fellowship" as the chief principle of salvation, and exalt it accordingly.

Matthew 18, 15-17, has been advanced as authority for dis-fellowship. Certain it is that the "bulk" dis-fellowshipping has not occurred according to this direction. As to individual cases it is doubtful whether Christ's words support these. Let the features be considered. The process of appeal to the offender is not hasty or impetuous, and forgiveness is of the enduring, patient type, as seen in verses 21-22. The preface of verses 12-14 has to be provided for. All brethren in Christ are His "little ones," and it is not God's Will that one of these should perish. The offender should be appealed to, not once, not twice, but continually. When patience and forbearance have become truly exhausted, which would not be next week, next month, and perhaps not next year (the critics may say "too tolerant"), then other brethren are to become witnesses of the next phase. The final appeal is to the church or ecclesia. If he refuses to hear the congregation, then "let him be unto thee (the offended brother) as a Gentile or publican.

Jesus has exhibited the proper way to treat Gentiles and publicans; and He did not treat His erring disciples more harshly. So that we have His example to follow. To say He meant that one brother should "dis-fellowship" another, is to import an idea foreign to His example and teaching. He would have us leave the ninety-nine which have not strayed, and restore the lost sheep. This is not "dis"-fellowship; it is quite the opposite.

Let none think that wicked and erring acts of "fellow" brethren are to pass unnoticed and unchecked. God has made provision for the proper treatment of transgressors. These are not to be dealt with in wholesale manner; each case is to be separately treated. In this connection may be mentioned the extraordinary case in I Cor. 5, which appears to have further consideration in 2 Cor. 2, and also that in 1 Tim. 1, 20. "Ecclesial resolutions," covering the so-called dis-fellowship of another ecclesia, have no standing: being both wrong and useless. There is a right and a wrong procedure to be adopted. The wrong is to pronounce "dis-fellowship;" the right is to announce "withdrawal ;" and an examination will exhibit these, not as one and the same thing, but distinct and different. If "dis," or the undoing of, fellowship has been provided by God as a retributive or corrective, and brethren exist qualified to administer it, then by all means let us give effect to it. If, on the other hand, our part lies in '-withdrawing," and there is no hesitation in affirming this as a divine provision, let us withdraw according to the command, and in the spirit of that command. Each "withdrawal" will vary according to the differing features of the case; but all should conform to the merciful injunction, "admonish them as brethren" and "regard them not as enemies" (2 Thess., 3, 15). How different and preferable to the ruthless practice of disfellowship!

Too often have brethren been made to feel themselves ecclesial outcasts. The greatest penalty—perhaps the greatest error of the administrator—has been visited on brethren, by excluding them from the Lord's Table, when with yearning desire they have sought to meet Him there. This action has passed current and is generally accepted both as "dis-fellowship" and "withdrawal." Two questions arise at this stage, nor ought they to be ignored or unanswered: (1) Do the Scriptures teach that "disfellowship" and "withdrawal" are equivalent terms? (2) What Scripture authorises us to exclude other brethren from the Lord's Table? This brings us to consider

## THE MEMORIAL SERVICE.

We shall see that this service sheds much light upon the question of fellowship. The words uttered by our Master were given for fulfilment. "Do this in remembrance of Me." Upon whom does that obligation rest? We recall His words, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." In this category His call found every member of the Body. After union with Him by baptism, we all sin. "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." (1 Jno., 1, 8.) In view of this, who of us is qualified or permitted to condemn our sinning brother? And to "do this" in compliance with His command, requires the presence of each one at His table, for in this manner we proclaim the Lord's death. Which member of God's family is exempted or excluded from this obligation? To do it not is to transgress; therefore to deny another from complying with His command, is to assume the right to set it aside. For this there is no warrant. But we do learn that whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven." Surely, so great and serious an action calls for very definite authority. Our righteousness must exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, or we shall not enter into the Kingdom of God.

"We meet to remember Christ" is a frequent introduction to an exhortation at the breaking of bread. It must be very difficult to 'remember Him' satisfactorily, if we also remember that we are responsible for preventing, wholly or partly, another brother, sinning or unsinning, from also "doing this" as he desires, and as Jesus requires. After all, the forced exemption now practised, is an ecclesial and not a Scriptural procedure. It is a tradition, and thus we make void the Word of God when we compel any to break the least, and especially Christ's important and final command to "Do this." For, who so much need to meet at His table and record the love of the departed Lord, as those who have strayed? It is



around His table where all are expected to meet, not to examine another, but self.

The farthest our duty takes us is to warn transgressors of their danger, and of their responsibility; then if, after self-examination, any takes the emblems unworthily by not discerning the Lord's Body, such a one takes condemnation. Do not prevent, "but LET a man examine himself and so LET him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.' All who have been baptized into Christ are members of His Body, and are entitled by His grace to partake of the emblems which are, or signify, Himself. Those who restrain willing members of His Body from complying with His wish in partaking, may be themselves guilty of not discerning, for all certainly form part of that Body. To exclude other members from "the table" is equivalent to casting them out. Even the beloved John was refused admission to the Church by Diotrephes, which should be regarded as a warning to others in these days. Hearken to the Apostle (3 John 9, 11 ) , speaking of Diotrephes, who "receiveth us not . . . and not content therewith neither doth he himself receive the brethren and them that would he forbiddeth, and casteth them out of the ecclesia. Beloved imitate not that which is evil, but that which is good." As serious thought is given to this subject, the clear thinker will find it grow in importance. It is not directed that anyone should keep even guilty members from His table; yet there are a great number of un-guilty ones who have been denied the emblems, simply in conformity with an ecclesial rule. We speak this from bitter experience. No ecclesial rule can override the commands of Christ. He said, "Do this," and we must ourselves obey, and permit and encourage others to do it if we would please Him and not ourselves. Refusing one of His little ones, we may incur "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto Me." (Matt. 25, 45.) We are commanded not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together; how then can we honour this when excluding others from our assembly?

## THE LORDS TABLE.

The next feature to have consideration is how "disfellowship" affects Christ's command under review. The breaking of bread is not in itself "fellowship;" it symbolizes the union of Christ with ourselves as individuals, comprising His Body. The emblems—bread and wine —symbolize Christ, but only when placed upon the table and consecrated to His service. Once upon the table they are His, and mentally, Him; consequently no member of the Body has any prior possession of or authority over these, any more than of the Master whom they represent. In his own right none may either give, or refrain from giving, Christ, who is memorialized by the emblems. Each member partaking these, partakes of Christ, with Whom, and the Father, fellowship has been, and remains established,

Some maintain that "withdrawal" excludes the member from partaking of the emblems of Christ. But who can produce the authority for such a procedure? It is found in our ecclesial Constitution, but not in the Word of God can it be found. From Christ we have no example of "dis-fellowship," though in the case of Judas there were all necessary elements, had Jesus chosen to practice or exemplify it; for "He knew what was in man." "Withdrawal" does not license us, however well-meaning and zealous we may be, to restrain Christ's brethren from coming to His table; for it is His, and not ours. Being His, however, we are not permitted to act differently from His command regarding it. "Do this. in remembrance of Me; This is My Body; This is My Blood." He claims full possession of the emblems and we need to remember that. He was sacrificed for all.

The licence for restraining another, or others, from partaking is assumed. It belongs to the ecclesiastical order which came after Christ; for there is no record of either Christ or the Apostles practising it. "Dis-fellowship" is not a Scriptural term or usage; neither are its principles in harmony with the example or precept of Christ. Diotrephes practised it, as has been observed;

the Papal system also "excommunicated" members, not alone as a mark of disapproval, but as a sign of authority. But they had ceased to regard the teaching that "One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." We sing the following hymn to recall the Lord's wish :--—

Do This, He cried. Until the end.

In memory of your dying Friend, Meet at My Table and record

The love of your departed Lord.

Will those ecclesias which have a rule excluding other brethren, examine this and ask themselves, why they should be privileged to sing and perform these words, while at the same time they disown, excommunicate, disfellowship, or cast out their brethren in Christ, and preclude them from singing as they sing, and from doing what Christ requires of all His friends? "Ye are My friends if ye do WHATSOEVER I command you."

#### AN ECCLESIAL STUMBLING BLOCK.

This will become clearer and plainer by citing our own experience while visiting different ecclesias. They admitted that they had no complaint against us on either doctrinal or moral grounds, but in compliance with an ecclesial rule, and for no other cause whatever, declined to permit us to take the emblems with them at the Lord's Table. The reason was expressed in this manner, "Spiritually you are in fellowship, technically you are not." How shockingly destructive of spiritual fruit is such a procedure! "Your ecclesia is not in fellowship with our ecclesia" This is contrary to the truth of the matter, for all members of all ecclesias have their names enrolled in the Lamb's Book of Life, and therefore must be in fellowship, both technically and spiritually. Any declaration of "dis-fellowship" is not based on Divine lines; and ecclesial rules to such effect do not bear Christ's impress. They should at once be expunged from

all ecclesial Constitutions, and the practice immediately ended. Then the most unworthy—and in God's sight who can claim more worthiness than another?—will be able to sing, if most penitently, the next verse of the cited hymn:

Jesus Thy feast we celebrate,  
We show Thy death, We sing Thy name  
Till Thou return, and we shall eat  
The marriage supper of the Lamb.

When some ecclesias have taken this desirable stand, and thrown overboard ecclesial tradition, otherwise "commandments of men," which now, as ever, make void the Word of God, the household of faith will revert to the wisdom of godliness. Then fellowship will occupy the place of dis-fellowship: peace will reign instead of friction; and there will be more harmony in the brotherhood than has existed for the past half-century. We are required by God to be at peace among ourselves. This should be put into operation quickly, not alone because the Master is at the door, but because He most surely would have His last prayer fulfilled in us, "that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one. Let each one of us do our part in the fulfilment of this prayer.

If "division" and "dis-fellowship" were not such destructive policies, we might leave them alone. But their practice seems to have produced little, if anything, but havoc. Jesus distinctly proclaimed that "a house divided against itself shall not stand." It is because we fear that He may return to find the household of God in its present shameful divided condition, we are making this appeal to the brotherhood, for a supreme effort on the part of all unto reconciliation. The house cannot stand; it must fall to pieces, unless this "casting out" ceases. The majority of divisions have no Scriptural support;

they are perpetuated simply because "we have sat by old tombs in the dark too long." They are supported by an obsolete and un-scriptural rule, nothing else. The following words, written by a deceased, and prominent brother, make clear the distinction between "withdrawal" and "disfellowship". Withdrawal is not expulsion.

It means modestly and sorrowfully stepping aside from the offender for fear of implication in his offence. Expulsion means kicking out, which implies and generates the arrogant attitude of ecclesiastical excommunication." So that when we withdraw, as is sometimes obligatory. we step aside from our erring brother; which though it looks like expulsion is not so, but is really admonition to the end that he may be ashamed. Thus we are giving him brotherly kindness for his advantage, and not for our satisfaction.

#### ONE—IN CHRIST JESUS.

We need to remember that all are joined together in the Lord, by a tie which is greater than any human tie. In the natural world there is the decree, "What God hath joined together let not man put asunder." Man's inability to sever a human marriage bond by granting divorce, exhibits the impossibility of one brother cutting Off or divorcing his fellow-brother in the Lord. for "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus." We have been united till the judgment seat of Christ; let us hope also, for all eternity. In this higher sense let us remember that God has joined us together, and therefore no man can put us asunder, notwithstanding any ecclesial rule or custom to the contrary. No ecclesial ordinance, however laudable, is able to set aside the inviolable law of God. "God is faithful through whom ye were called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord (I Cor. I, 9). At once we see what a high calling this is. It is a holy calling, which each member of the household has heard. We should value it as the greatest blessing our Father has conferred those who upon have us. We should not treat it lightly nor those who have it. Instead of assuming the right

to dis-fellowship our brethren, let us help each other to win through to the Kingdom of God.

It would be possible to write at much greater length, but it is not intended to exhaust the all-important topic. It has lain dormant too long; now it is hoped that it will take its position amongst the brethren as a matter of great moment. We ask brethren and ecclesias everywhere to espouse and examine it. As a subject for Bible Class consideration, it cannot be excelled; the theme of "fellowship in the Lord" is so edifying that, as a basis for exhortation it has no compeer; its value is so helpful and exhilarating that, as a matter of conversation it will produce strength and vigour. There is great fear that our ecclesial organizations are losing their vitality; but this most excellent study will stimulate all who give attention to it, so that their chief desire will be to work for the advancement of God's truth in harmony and love. The more this subject finds its way into the hearts and minds of the brethren and sisters, the less room and time will uncertain speculations on remote doctrines occupy.

We shall be so busily engaged in this theme of supreme value, that we shall unconsciously be built, and building each other, up in our most holy faith, by putting into practice before the world and towards each other, the Master's command to "Love one another." "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are.' Let us therefore give effect to our "high calling of God" by exemplifying love towards each other through living in the bonds of "FELLOWSHIP IN THE LORD."

To this greatly-to-be-desired end may the God of Peace direct our thoughts. Amen.