

The Christadelphian Advocate

“He that hath My word, let him speak My word faithfully”

Vol. 72, No. 11

November 1957

\$2.50 A Year

A Plea for Unity - - Based On Soundness An Outline of the Scriptural Principles of Fellowship

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INTRODUCTION

In human society, when individuals join together for any collective endeavor or organization, the foundation of such work must rest upon rules or laws. This is a necessity if confusion is to be avoided.

Those who are joined together as followers of Jesus Christ are not exempt from this principle. There is perfect liberty for a disciple of Jesus, but only when he abides faithfully within the framework of the wise commandments or rules which Jesus has left for the guidance of his followers. This is true of the individual believer, and it is especially true of the collective group known as the Ecclesia or church.

For there to be unity among groups of believers, or Ecclesias, there must not only be likemindedness upon doctrinal principles (as expressed in a Statement of Faith); there must also be agreement upon the rules and procedures which have been set down by Jesus and his Apostles for the orderly governing of these Ecclesias.

In our times, among the Ecclesias or believers called Christadelphians, it is customary to subscribe to the principles and teachings of Jesus and his Apostles as summarised in the Birmingham Statement of Faith, together with the appended list of “Doctrines to be Rejected”. It is also customary to recognize as rules of personal conduct the collected commandments of Christ.

It is supposed by many, in all sincerity, that these doctrines and rules are a sufficient basis to ensure a smooth-running Ecclesia, and a satisfactory inter-relationship with other Ecclesias of the same persuasion. Unfortunately, this supposition is not well founded. While the Statement of Faith and the commandments are indeed essential, they are useful in the work for which they were intended only to the extent to which they are supported and maintained by the rules of the Ecclesia professing them. In other words, a Statement of Faith is only as effective as the arranging board or management which maintains it. And in maintaining the Scriptural principles of doctrine and walk, it is essential that we recognize a *third* set of Scriptural principles which must also form a part of our Ecclesial foundation, if we are to preserve that form of sound doctrine which has been entrusted to us. This third set of principles is the rules laid down for the guidance of our Ecclesias, and for the preservation of the unity of fellowship, which membership in them implies.

Unity, and the joys of fraternal fellowship, to be pleasing to our heavenly Father, must conform to these Scriptural principles. Any other form of fellowship would be unsound and should therefore be unacceptable to the sincere follower of Jesus.

In the pages to follow, it is our intention to outline these Scriptural rules for

Ecclesial guidance, in the hope that, better understood, they will be better observed by all of like precious Faith.

FELLOWSHIP

“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3). Analysing this statement, we find that for two or more persons to walk the same path, they must possess something in *common*. They must be agreed as to direction, speed, and destination of their walk.

As the result of the preaching of the gospel by the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, after the Resurrection, about 3000 persons believed and were baptised. Of these Luke says, “They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). We would call attention to this word “fellowship”. Unfortunately it does not fully convey the meaning of the Greek work *koinonia*, which it is supposed to translate. *Koinonia* means that which is held in common. Thus these early Christians, enlightened and immersed, continued to walk in the teachings of the Apostles, and in the things held in common by the Apostles, among which were the practices of Breaking of Bread (the Memorial Service enjoined by Jesus) and of praying (also the result of Jesus’ instruction). They were *agreed* with the Apostles on all these things at the time of their conversion, and their continuance in them constituted “*koinonia*”, a sharing in common, or fellowship.

Breaking of bread was a part of fellowship, as we will show, but fellowship was not limited to the breaking of bread alone. Fellowship comprises oneness of mind, communion, the walking together of those who are in agreement on vital principles. It is a many-faceted thing. The Apostles envisioned it as much more than just the simple holding in common of

the elements of the gospel, vital as these are.

For example, there is “the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9); “the fellowship of the ministering to the saints”, which Paul was asked to participate in (2 Cor. 8:4); and “the fellowship of his (Jesus’) sufferings”, which Paul desired to know (Phil. 3:10). John was pleased to declare what he had seen concerning the Lord, “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). And he continues, “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but 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” (vv. 6, 7). Again Paul tells the Philippian believers that by his bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, they are partakers (*koinonia*, sharers in common) with him of grace (Phil. 1:7).

Charity, or love, being the greatest attribute of a Christian, we should not be surprised to find that charitable acts and collections for the poor are also a part of fellowship. Thus in Romans 15:26, 27 we read, “For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution (*koinonia*, sharing in common) for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem...For if the Gentiles have been made partakers (*koinonia*, sharers in common) of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.”

We have said that the breaking of bread was not identical with fellowship. It was, however, the crowning act of fellowship. In fact, breaking of bread might be said to be related to fellowship in much the same way that baptism is related to belief of the gospel: namely, it is the public evidence of an inner conviction. And as baptism is fruitless

unless it is preceded by belief of the Apostles' doctrine, so breaking of bread is not pleasing to God unless it is accompanied by fellowship, which means the holding in common of these same Apostles' doctrines and practices. This is clearly taught by Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:16-21, though "koinonia" is translated "communion" and "partaker" instead of fellowship: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion (fellowship) of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion (fellowship) of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers (sharers in common, or fellowshippers) of the altar?...But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils (*daimon*, evil spirit), and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers (fellowshippers) of the Lord's table, and the table of devils."

What brings fellowship into being?

The example of the day of Pentecost, just cited, shows that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Then, after baptism, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me (Paul) his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; who hath saved us, and called (*kaleo*, Greek) us with an holy calling (*klesis*, Greek), not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace" (2 Tim. 1:8, 9). This is the path of fellowship.

We lose much of the interesting interplay of words in the original of the sacred text as a result of their translation into English. Thus in the text just quoted the Greek verb *kaleo* means *call*, while the gerund form of the same

word, *klesis*, means *calling*. When the prefix "e" is added it becomes *ekklesis* or (with different case ending) *ekklesia*, or *ones called out*. This is the origin of our term Ecclesia or church, which is the assembly of those called to fellowship. By contrast, the congregation of Israel, led out of Egypt by Moses and into Canaan by Joshua, was known by the Hebrew term *qahal*, an assembly called together. The Septuagint substituted for this the Greek word *sunagoge*, having the same meaning.

God's nation was called together to their meetings. But when Israel proved themselves unworthy, God sent his Son to call (Gr., *kaleo*) them to repentance. Those who heeded the call, forsook the synagogue, and were called out to form the Ecclesia. And so they are designated to this day.

To summarise the fundamental principles set forth:

1. Calling, belief, and baptism bring a mortal man into fellowship with God through Jesus Christ.
2. Those who have been so called out are to join together in assemblies or Ecclesias.
3. Membership in these Ecclesias requires that we hold in common the doctrines and practices of the Apostles.

This is fellowship.

DISFELLOWSHIP

Human nature being what it is, it is inevitable that certain members of any organization will from time to time incline to differ from the rules set up for the governing of the group. Sometimes these infractions will be of a minor character, and the organization will see fit to overlook the matter. However, if a member or a faction comes into serious collision with the established rules of the group, and if the breach so produced cannot be reconciled, then the organization will usually expel the dissidents. The minority

will have been sacrificed for the best interests of the majority.

This principle has been applied by God in his dealings with mankind. Thus the Flood came in the days of Noah, so that sinners might be cut off, and righteous people spared. The laws given Moses for the governing of Israel were explicit in requiring the cutting off and even the putting to death of those anti-social persons who violated the precepts which God had laid down for the moral and spiritual good of the community as a whole. Many more examples might be cited.

When God's interest in the synagogues of Israel began to wane, owing to the sinfulness of the Jews, his efforts to "purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" centered in the Christian Ecclesia. But the Ecclesia was "not under the law, but under grace". By this we mean that, while Jesus and his Apostles gave many commandments for the observance of the believers, it was never a right given to the Ecclesia to punish anyone for the violation of the Christian precepts.

This is a very vital point, overlooked by many. It was also a principle violated when the church became apostate from the Truth, an abuse which led, in the early days of Catholicism, to the setting up of church courts, or inquisitions, with power to judge and punish offenders of church law. Jesus said, "The Father...hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22); and "he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). And speaking of the believers, Peter says of them: "Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead" (1 Pet. 4:5). And Paul testifies of Jesus Christ, that he "shall judge the quick and the

dead at his appearing and his kingdom" (2 Tim. 4:1). To ourselves we should take the advice of Jesus, "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven" (Luke 6:37). In personal matters, or in Ecclesial actions, these commands ought never be lost sight of.

But if the Ecclesias have not been empowered to judge and punish violators of Christ's commandments, what is to be done with such violators when they make themselves evident within the Ecclesia? Certainly the presence of an increasing number of individuals whose mode of life is a gross violation of the teachings of Jesus would in time demoralize and seduce many who themselves desire to live righteously.

The New Testament writers have dealt with this problem in unmistakable language. While tolerance and patience are required in dealing with minor misunderstandings and infractions, more serious sins are specifically identified, and the attitude the Ecclesias are expected to maintain toward them is clearly set forth.

Sins requiring the action of the Ecclesia are dealt with under two separate classifications in the Scriptures. We shall treat of them here in like manner. These are: moral sins; and sins of heresy or departure from the established doctrines taught by the Apostles.

Moral Sins: The inspired writers gave plentiful exhortation to the followers of Jesus that they were to live clean, decent lives; and were to "eschew evil, and do good" (1 Pet. 3:11). Professed students of the Word should not plead ignorance as an excuse for serious sins. The rules for righteous living are there for the guidance of all who will consult them.

The Apostle Paul records a number of sins which, when committed, required action by the Ecclesia, or by sound believers as individuals.

For example: “I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters: for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a *brother* be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer (reviler), or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat...Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person” (1 Cor. 5:9-11, 13).

With persons clearly guilty of such sins, we are expressly forbidden:

1. To keep company (literally, to mix up together with);
2. To eat (Greek word “*esthio*” plus prefix “*sun*”, meaning “eat with”).

Esthio is used several times in the Scriptures to describe the act of eating the Lord’s Supper. While it is not limited to this, it must certainly be included here as among those things we may not eat with the sinners just described. (Compare 1 Cor. 11:24-29).

Again Paul speaks similarly to the Ephesian believers: “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savor. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God...Be not ye therefore partakers with them...And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Ephesians 5:1-11).

The summing up of these sins in this passage is: first, no fellowship

(Greek, *koinonia*) with them; secondly, rebuke the offender (meaning to convict or convince).

Perhaps the most vigorous language of all is found in the 2nd epistle to the Thessalonians. While some would limit this to “busybodies” and shiftless nonproducers, the language is much too sweeping for so limited an application. “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from *every* brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition (handing down) which he received of us” (2 Thess. 3:6). And verse 14: “If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.”

This commandment goes beyond the listing of any group of sins. Here is required the withdrawing from any believer whose conduct is in violation of any of the instructions handed down in the inspired writings of the Apostles, including the recorded words of the Master himself. While tolerance and brotherly love will temper the actions of just brethren attempting to follow these commands in spirit, if not in letter, the fact remains that certain sins, unrepented of, must be considered as grounds for withdrawal, if we are not ourselves to be adjudged guilty of wrongdoing.

Sins of Heresy: “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10).

If this advice were followed by all believers, there could be no sins of heresy. It is a peculiarity of the human mind, that it is continually striving to improve that with which it comes in contact. Rightly applied, this is a good tendency; but it is best applied to our environment, as God has commanded, “Replenish the earth,

and subdue it” (Gen. 1:28). It is a bad tendency when we look at the One Faith and attempt to improve it. What God has spoken, his promises, his prophecies, are not changing. They are intended to be the basis of the same hope in us that they were to Abraham, and to all faithful ones in the years between.

Scarcely a decade passes, but what some free thinker endeavors to promote a “new” idea to the brotherhood. If these new ideas went unchallenged, if they were tolerated magnanimously, in a few short years we would have lost the Truth. This is what happened in the century or two after the Apostles set up the original Christian Ecclesia. By the third century, most of the errors of the present-day apostasy had already been introduced. The gospel, which alone can save, was lost. In its place was a blend of religions, called Christianity, but actually Platonism, mixed liberally with paganism, with a sprinkling of Mosaic Judaism, all displayed behind a facade of Christianity.

Of the effectiveness of this kind of perverted Christianity Paul spoke forcefully, “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8). Yet Paul also knew that there would be a perverting of the gospel, before Jesus returned. He told those of Thessalonica: “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away (from the Truth) first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition...even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan (opposer) with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a

lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thess. 2:3, 9-12). And his exhortation was, “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” (verse 15).

Modern believers face exactly the same dangers of perversion of the gospel, by the introduction of new ideas, as was faced by the early believers. Profiting by the example of those who did lose the Faith in this way, modern believers have devised a summary of vital doctrines which we call a Statement of Faith (which includes a list of unscriptural doctrines which are to be rejected). By means of this we can quickly determine what has been considered the saving Truth in the past, and thereby test ourselves to see if we still believe as did our immediate forebears in the Truth. All of the so-called new ideas or theories which are presented to the brotherhood with appealing logic from time to time, will usually be found to be wanting when tested by the standard of our Statement of Faith. Furthermore, if we ourselves begin to doubt the truth of some of the propositions of this Statement, we would do well to apply ourselves in study more carefully. It is probably we, and not the Statement of Faith which is at fault.

It should not be inferred from this that our Statement is to be accepted on equal footing with the Inspired Writings. Only the Scripture can be accepted as the last word. But sound brethren framed the Statement of Faith, and sound brethren have found it acceptable as a summary of Bible teaching, for about three quarters of a century. It is therefore deserving of our respect. And it is certainly a very reliable instrument for calling attention to false doctrines when they present themselves, from whatever source.

If it be recognized, as we have pointed

out, that the addition of new ideas to the gospel delivered to us in the Inspired Writings makes that gospel ineffective to save us, then it must also be recognized that any believer whose thinking becomes heretical, so that he attempts to teach false ideas, or doctrines, becomes a dangerous adversary in our midst. This is matter of simple logic. The question then is, What shall be the attitude of the sound believer and the sound Ecclesia toward such a perverter of the glad tidings? The New Testament writers again leave us in no doubt on the question.

“Now I entreat you, brethren, to watch those who are making factions (divisions) and laying snares, contrary to the teaching which you have learned, and *turn away from them*. For such like ones as they are not in subjection to our Anointed Lord, but to their own appetite; and by kind and complimentary words they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting” (Rom. 16:17,18, Diaglott translation).

The teacher of error invariably tries to get followers. When he does obtain followers he has made a faction or division in the Ecclesia. Such a one can only be turned away from, or withdrawn from, by the sound members of the Ecclesia. In no other way is it possible to isolate him, and render his false teachings less harmful to the Ecclesia.

But we are not limited to being required to withdraw only from teachers of error. We saw in 2 Thessalonians 3:6 how Paul commanded to withdraw from *every* brother whose walk is not according to the tradition (or handing down) which we have received of the Apostles. The same writer also says, “If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings,

evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: *from such withdraw thyself*” (1 Tim. 6:3-5).

Here certainly are two classes of individuals who may require to be withdrawn from: those who teach, and those who also consent, or, as the Diaglott puts it, *assent*, not to the wholesome doctrines of the Lord, but prefer doting about questions and strifes of words, and so forth.

This latter type of individual is further described in 2 Tim. 4:3, 4 (Diaglott), “For there will be a time when they will not endure wholesome instruction, but will accumulate teachers for themselves, according to their own inordinate desires, tickling their ear, and they will indeed turn away from the hearing of the truth, and be turned aside to fables”.

And writing at a later date, the Apostle John confirms what Paul had previously predicted: “Children! it is the last hour; and as you heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many have become antichrists; whence we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but it was that they might be made manifest that they are not all of us” (1 John 2:18, 19, Diaglott).

To withdraw from a teacher of error will frequently cause the followers of the false teacher to go “out from us” voluntarily. In such a circumstance they will “turn away from the hearing of the truth” and be turned aside to fables.

But those who assent to false doctrine do not always go out from us of their own accord, for John also says, “Every one who goes beyond, and does not abide in the doctrine of the Anointed one (Jesus), has not God. He who abides in the doctrine, has both the Father and the Son. If any one come to you and bring not this doctrine, do not receive him into your

house, nor wish him success; for he who wishes him success partakes in his evil works” (2 John 9-11, Diaglott).

The Greek word *koinonia*, which we have already considered in connection with fellowship, is here translated *partaker*. Actually the real meaning is that true Christians who tolerate or approve one who holds or teaches doctrinal error are guilty of fellowshiping that error; and we recall how that, according to 1 Corinthians 10:19-21, one cannot fellowship both God and idols, or truth and error. One or the other must go. In God’s sight, if we bid the error Godspeed we are then in fellowship with the error; and because of this fact, we have ceased to be in fellowship with God, through his Son Jesus Christ. For this reason Paul advised Titus, “A man that is a heretic (maker of divisions) after the first and second admonition reject” (Titus 3:10). Paul also recognized the inevitability of divisions among the believers, as a result of his commands to turn away from those who make divisions, for he says: “For there must be also heresies (divisions) among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you” (1 Cor. 11:19).

So we see that sin, whether moral or heretical, was not to be tolerated in the Ecclesia. It was to be withdrawn from. If we would ask, How? the answer is supplied by Jesus himself, in one of the most profound pieces of wisdom ever given for the guidance of his followers: “Now if thy brother be in error (Gr. sin), go, convict him, between thee and him alone. If he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that by the testimony of two or three witnesses, every thing may be proved. But if he disregard them, inform the congregation; and if he disregard the congregation also, let him be to thee as a pagan and a

tribute-taker” (Matt. 18:15-17, Diaglott).

The profoundness of these rules of the Saviour become more evident when we reflect that they work in several directions. First of all, they prescribe the proper method for any individual believer to ventilate a grievance which he may hold against another believer. Spreading about an evil report to others, is in itself a violation of the Lord’s command. Go to the individual concerned. Sometimes the person with the grievance is the one in error. If the complainer has worked up a faction *before* he goes to the one at fault, fear of “losing face” may serve to prevent him from admitting he is wrong, and thus dropping the whole question. On the other hand, if he is right, but the offender refuses to admit it, he still has the duty of going to one or two other believers to try to make them see the error of the party at fault. In the course of “taking counsel together” with other sound believers (and he should choose that type to confide in), he may still be shown to be mistaken, and the matter may still be dropped. If not, then two or three meeting with the one in error may convince him. But if all this is of no avail, the last recourse is action by the whole Ecclesia. This may or may not lead to withdrawal, depending upon the seriousness of the charges, and the status of the one in error.

There is, for example, the word of Paul, “Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations” (Rom. 14:1). This is a badly misused text, partly because the sense of the original fails to come through to us in the English. A careful cross analysis of the passage, (which can be verified by Young’s or Strong’s concordance), would give us the following: “One who is without strength in the faith, take to yourselves, but not to judge his contrary reasoning (or debate)”. Thus a novice, or one who is weak in the Truth,

whose ideas upon the weightier matters of the Scripture may be far from sound, should not necessarily be withdrawn from, or judged, on the basis of his rather ill-considered, or tactless assertions which may be contrary to what sound brethren know to be right. Rather, he will be patiently reasoned with, and gently schooled in what is right. This verse does not, of course, apply to a believer who has been sound and well versed in the Faith, but has since turned away from the sound doctrines he originally held, in favor of false doctrines. While such also ought to be patiently reasoned with, in hopes of reclaiming him, if he persists in error, no other course remains but to withdraw.

The importance of warning or “convicting” a brother seen to commit a serious sin will be better realized, perhaps, when we call to mind a principle of law which is doubtless familiar to all. It has to do with an accessory to a crime. It is common to think of a lawbreaker (a robber possibly), as being worthy of punishment in a court of law. Occasionally we also hear of someone who had no part in committing the crime itself, but who assisted the criminal to evade capture by officers of the law. Such a person is viewed by the law as an accessory after the fact, and may be subject to almost as severe punishment as the criminal himself.

The same principle is enunciated by Almighty God through the prophet Ezekiel: “When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but *his* blood will I require at *thine* hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou has delivered thy soul” (Ezek. 33:8, 9).

Let this fact be borne clearly in mind: If sound believers, after having acted together to

warn any as Matthew 18 requires, have determined that a believer or believers have in fact departed from an essential portion of the Faith, or are guilty of gross moral sin, they have no recourse but to *withdraw*, if said member or members do not repent. Failure to do so, in itself is a sin.

These are sobering thoughts. We are our brother’s keeper. Disfellowship is the final act required by Scripture whereby we may warn our brother and, if we cannot save him, at least avoid being implicated in his sin.

LOVE

When the question of disfellowshipping is discussed by Christadelphians, it is not uncommon to hear someone raise vigorous objections to the idea of withdrawal for any cause. Several reasons may possibly be advanced in defense of this position, of which the following are the most pertinent:

1. If we love our brothers and sisters as Christ has commanded us, we certainly cannot do anything so cruel to them as withdrawing from them.
2. We are commanded not to judge our brother or sister. To withdraw, involves judging and punishing, or at least the threat of punishing. We should agree to differ, and leave the matter for the judgment seat of Christ.
3. It is the Lord’s Table; we have no right to bar anyone from it.

If these objections are valid, they bring us at once into conflict with the Apostolic commands which we have been considering in the preceding section. Let us examine these objections, one at a time, and see wherein the discrepancy lies.

1. Jesus said, “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:12,13). Certainly the beautiful admonitions to

brotherly love, to be found in the Scriptures, ought to be in our minds at all times. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20). Paul points out (1 Cor. 13) that charity, or love, is the highest achievement of which the thinking mind is capable. All of this points up the fact that it is unthinkable that true Christians should *ever* deviate from the practice of brotherly love.

Yet when differences arise in an Ecclesia of believers, and some one, or ones, appear to differ greatly from the principles which Scripture teaching have laid down, all too often we witness a display of temper, of ill will, of *fleshly thinking* which simply cannot be reconciled with these lofty sentiments on brotherly love. We see believers engaged in heated arguments, table pounding, anger, malice. If disfellowship does come, we sometimes see both parties to the dispute so embittered they refuse to speak to one another, passing by on the street with no sign of recognition. Rancor, spite, vindictiveness have swallowed up Christian principles. Alas! How weak we are at times!

But does this mean that the principle of disfellowshipping for Scriptural cause ought to be abandoned as unworkable?; that it is incompatible with the sentiments of love and brotherly kindness? Stop and reason.

Paul said, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ". Perhaps by observing the Master, we may gain a lesson upon this point also.

We have just cited Scripture attesting to Jesus' love for mankind, and this might be amplified many times. However, that love is directed toward honest-hearted people who *want* to do right, but who are the captives of sin, too weak to save themselves. He has no love for willful, intractable sinners; only righteous indignation.

"The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:7, 8).

Let us analyse this attribute of love somewhat. It not infrequently happens in life that we must choose between two or more things that we love. It may not be anything that we want to do. It is more apt to come as a circumstance over which we have no control. A simple example would be an invitation from friends to join with them in a pleasant outing on a Sunday. What will we love more: the company of pleasant friends of the world, or the Lord's Table upon a first-day morning? Even for sound believers, well grounded in the Faith, it can sometimes be a disconcerting choice, with many circumstances to complicate the picture. God does try us in this way sometimes, and each time that we successfully pass the test, our characters become the stronger for it.

Think of Abraham, who loved his only son Isaac very much, and yet who also loved God. What a challenge he faced when the God whom he loved and trusted, commanded him to slay and sacrifice the son whom he also loved! Yet Abraham met the challenge by putting God first; and because of this his son was spared to him. This lesson ought never to be lost sight of by those who profess faith in Almighty God.

When a brother or a sister we love commits a wrong, or begins to preach a false doctrine, what are we to do? God has commanded us to withdraw from such a one, after all reasoning and kindly persuasion shall have failed. Whom do we love more: God, or this brother or sister? This is the same issue that Abraham faced. Certainly, to ignore or evade the challenge, to shrink from the decision can hardly be pleasing to God. Besides, is our faith so weak that we

cannot believe that God will right the situation in some manner if we but do our part and carry out the instructions given?

Perhaps it was circumstances like this that Jesus had in mind when he said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother *more* than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:34-38).

God never demands a sacrifice but what he offers a reward. So in this case Jesus also says, "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting" (Luke 18:29, 30).

We have emphasised strongly the duty of believers to withdraw, when the Scriptural reasons exist for doing so. We cannot omit also a word of caution. If we should happen to be involved in a situation which requires us to support an Ecclesial move to withdraw, we should not allow ourselves to take action upon the question until we have had an opportunity, however brief, for introspection. We should examine our motives, and those of the majority of the Ecclesia about to take action. The mind is often subtle. The real reason we do many things does not always appear evident. If there is present, as a cause of withdrawal, any base or selfish motive, it is time to go slow. If there is any desire to punish an offender, best reconsider for a time. If there exists any feeling of jealousy, judgment

may be beclouded. The only lawful motives for withdrawal are the desire on the part of the ones withdrawing to awaken the offending one to a realization of his mistake, and the desire to stand aside from the sin of the offender, that we may not be held party to the offense by our heavenly Father. Other motives than these two had best be regarded with suspicion.

So far as the table-pounding, the arguing and the ill will are concerned, they are all due to the weaknesses of the flesh. They are evidence of a lack of self-control. The principle of withdrawal is not wrong; but the weakness of those attempting to carry out the command to withdraw sometimes introduces sin from another direction which ought not to be there. "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (2 Tim. 2:24-26).

2. Does withdrawing from a believer mean that we are judging and punishing such a one? Scripturally, the answer to this ought to be an emphatic *no!* but unfortunately, it is occasionally all too true. Sometimes brethren use the threat of withdrawal in an effort to force their will upon the majority. How un-Christlike this is! It could never happen if "each esteemed his brother better than himself to be".

Disfellowship is not intended to be used as a punishment. Rather, it must always be regarded as the Scriptural way of saying: We must stand aside from what you are doing. We leave the judgment of what you have done in the hands of Jesus at his judgment seat. We pray that he will forgive you, but we cannot walk

with you until you acknowledge your wrong and repent of it.

We should ever remember that God may forgive the one we are withdrawing from. We should never abuse or revile. It is enough to rebuke, to differ, to separate, and above all to pray for the one withdrawn from. Beyond this the true believer must not go.

3. Yes, it is the Lord's Table and not ours; but we have been appointed as custodians of that Table in his absence. Just as the Nobleman (Luke 19:12-27) loaned talents out to his servants while he went into a far country, and demanded an accounting when he returned; and just as the Lord of the vineyard (Matt. 21:33-43) demanded his just dues from the husbandmen to whom he had let out his vineyard; even so shall we be required to give an account of our stewardship. We are expected to be diligent in the Lord's business. "Let all things be done decently (becomingly) and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40). Certainly in the matter of the crowning act of fellowship, the breaking of bread, we cannot be called diligent unless we heed the advice of John, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try (prove) the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

The Lord's Table is only that when those about it hold in common (fellowship) the doctrines of the Lord. We are bound together in an Ecclesia and are a "lightstand" only when we give off the pure gospel light. If sin, in the form of immorality or false doctrine should enter our Ecclesia, we should promptly heed the solemn warning given by Jesus to the Ecclesia at Ephesus: "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly (speedily), and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (Rev. 2:5).

The responsibility rests with us as to whether our assembly will meet at "the Lord's Table" or at just another table. It is the Lord's Table only if those about it all share in common (fellowship) the doctrines and the practices which he has commanded. "Where two or three are gathered together *in my name*, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20).

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

In applying the principles we have been considering, to present day situations within the brotherhood, it is essential for us to bear in mind the fact that disfellowship is intended for use in serious matters *only*. Grievous sin, or departure from recognized fundamental teachings, must be clearly evident before there can possibly be a Scriptural reason to withdraw.

When differences of a secondary character arise, we are commanded to be tolerant of one another. We may differ in opinion, but we may not separate, nor may we be contentious. The proper attitude toward such less important issues is touched on in Proposition 42 of the "Ecclesial Guide", and it will not be dealt with here.

We have written at some length upon the Scriptural principles to be observed in cases that require withdrawal. One motive for so doing is the presence in the brotherhood of a minority who, sickened perhaps by the divisions which have beset us in the past, have reacted against the very idea of withdrawal for any cause whatever. As we have tried to make plain, such a reactionary viewpoint is unscriptural. The plain facts are that the command to withdraw in certain circumstances is given in the Word of God. It can no more be evaded than can the equally inspired teachings of the resurrection, or the return of Jesus to earth.

We are not unmindful of another minority among the believers, the opposite

of the first, who not only endorse the principle of withdrawal, but carry it to such extremes as to make themselves guilty of unscriptural conduct also.

There are those, for example, who seek to entrap a well meaning brother in some questionable statement which they suppose will prove him to be in doctrinal error and thus worthy of disfellowship. Such persons are usually suspicious, critical, self-righteous. Having found some hapless one with whom they differ slightly, they attempt to “make a man an offender for a word...and turn aside the just for a thing of nought” (Isa. 29:21), some form of reversed thinking causing them to suppose that this demonstrates their own soundness and righteousness.

By contrast, really sound and conscientious brethren are invariably moved toward the necessity of withdrawal with great reluctance. Never do they eagerly seek an excuse for raising an issue. Neither do they evade the issue if it arises. In such times of crises, sound brethren will usually be evident by their firm, but conservative demeanor. They will practice faithfully the virtues commended by the apostle Paul, “With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the *unity* of the Spirit in the *bond* of peace” (Eph. 4:2, 3).

Another extreme position of this kind concerns the matter of premature withdrawal. One, or more overzealous believers may feel that an erring brother has not been withdrawn from with sufficient promptness, or they may presume that a visitor to their Ecclesia has been wrongly welcomed to the table. Instead of carrying out their Scriptural duty, they simply refrain from partaking of the Emblems when the objectionable party is present, for fear of becoming “contaminated”.

Except in very rare instances, this

procedure has nothing to commend it. The idea that one can become contaminated by participation at the Memorial Service with one who is a sinner is usually derived from studies of the types and shadows of the Mosaic Law, particularly those having to do with the plague of leprosy. While such studies are of great interest to well grounded believers they must be tempered with the stern warning of Paul, “Avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law (Mosaic); for they are unprofitable and vain” (Titus 3:9).

Nothing in Mosaic type or shadow can set aside the simple procedure laid down by Jesus in Matthew 18:15-17 for dealing with those whom we supposed to be unworthy of fellowship. To disfellowship first and negotiate afterwards is in itself a breach of the commandments of Christ.

It is certain that the teachings of Jesus require strict adherence on the part of his followers. However it is quite possible to be so strict in observing the letter of Christ’s commands that we lose the spirit which his teachings are intended to instill. “The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” (2 Cor. 3:6).

The scribes and Pharisees were very religious people. Yet Jesus vigorously condemned them for their hypocritical adherence to petty things, while failing utterly to observe the right attitude in important matters. Nowhere is this principle better illustrated than in the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-37. The priest and the Levite, smug in their knowledge and practice of law, reacted selfishly toward the wounded man on the road. By the law they would be unclean if they touched a dead body. They preferred to take the chance that a wounded man would die, rather than risk “uncleanness” for themselves should the “half dead” man turn out, on investigation, to be already dead. The Samaritan, unburdened

by such legal thinking, was moved by compassion. He had no selfish thoughts. He desired only to help another less fortunate than himself. Thus the Samaritan truly observed the great commandment to “love thy neighbor as thyself”; while the priest and Levite, skilled in the letter of the ordinances, completely failed in their reaction to the command that required mercy.

We might take the lesson to ourselves in matters involving fellowship and withdrawal. A brother “overtaken in a fault” may have to be withdrawn from; but we must first see if he can be restored in a spirit of meekness. To withdraw promptly may insulate our meeting from the sin of the errant one; but to work as long as possible with the sinner, may save his life: eternal life, that is. There is room for discretion in applying the letter of the commandment, so that we do not err in haste, nor be lax in doing our duty.

In former years, it used to be the custom for a travelling brother or sister to bring with them a letter of introduction from the secretary of the meeting regularly attended. This letter would testify to the doctrinal soundness and good character of the traveler, and thus gain him a ready welcome from any Ecclesia he might visit.

It is regrettable that this custom has been neglected almost to the point of being dispensed with in late years. For how else can a dutiful arranging board determine the status of a visiting believer more easily than by a letter of introduction? Lacking this, there must be discreet but searching questions put forth in an effort to make certain that the one about to be admitted to that most sacred service is truly “of the same mind” with the sound believers already assembling.

Some visitors, not properly informed, may be offended by being so questioned. They suppose the claim

to being “a Christadelphian” is sufficient identification, and show resentment at being examined on their beliefs.

How shortsighted this attitude is! Peter says, “Be ready *always* to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15). We should rather be glad when we are so questioned, as the interview works both ways, and we have an opportunity to “try the spirits” also, and to determine the soundness of the Ecclesia we are about to cast in our lot with.

While upon this subject of the receiving of visitors, we would remark that most sound Ecclesias usually have well established procedures for determining the status of visitors and for deciding who shall be welcomed to the Memorial Service. As a matter of interest for those who may wish to study the matter, we give herewith one such set of “rules governing the procedure in welcoming visitors to the Memorial Service”. We quote:

This Meeting will be happy to welcome to fellowship the following:

1. Christadelphians known to be in good standing themselves and coming from a meeting in good standing which adheres to the Birmingham Unamended Statement of Faith.

2. Christadelphians known to be in good standing themselves who adhere to the said Statement of Faith, even if living in isolation.

3. Christadelphians who are *individually sound* even if coming from:

- a. Meetings of the Unamended Fellowship not in good standing.

- b. Meetings of the Amended Fellowship.

- c. Meetings of neither Amended nor Unamended Fellowship.

(See point number 4 for application here.)

Individual Soundness would comprise:

1. Having been baptised into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

2. Belief (at baptism and now) of the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the Name of Jesus Christ, as set forth in the Birmingham Unamended Statement of Faith.

3. Comprehension of and agreement with the original *Advocate* position on the interpretation of our Statement of Faith as it relates to the nature of man, nature and sacrifice of Christ, and baptism.

4. Agreement not to return to former affiliates to break bread.

By way of explanation of the above, the phrase “good standing” is understood to mean sound of doctrine and, in the case of an individual, of good character also. The Number 4 required of believers who, though individually sound, come from a fellowship affiliation which may not be, is essential if we are to avoid violation of 2 John 9-11.

Mention of fellowships in the foregoing “rules” leads us to a consideration of how the Apostolic commands on fellowship and withdrawal should apply in the case of large divisions involving whole Ecclesias and even sections of the brotherhood. Such divisions are very distressing, inasmuch as they are rarely clearcut, and they often produce situations where many on both sides, if examined individually, would be found to be sound, so far as their fundamental beliefs are concerned. So confusing is the pattern produced by the larger divisions, that those young in the Faith are often completely mystified, while even stronger brethren are moved to doubt the Ecclesial rules which appear to have led to such disorder. Others, seeking to analyse the problem, are moved to place the blame solely on differences which occur sometimes between brethren of considerable influence and ability. In what follows we shall endeavor to bring an orderly application of the Scripture teachings of fellowship to bear on this complex problem, in order that our actions may be regulated by a “thus saith the Lord”. To begin with, let us examine first this suggestion that our large fellowship problems are due to the differences between brethren of influence.

The Scriptures in many places liken

bodies of believers (in all ages) to sheep, and their leaders to shepherds whose duty it is to care for and provide for the flock. Speaking to the elders, or men of influence, in an Ecclesia, Peter says, “Feed the flock of God...taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (1 Pet. 5:2-4).

Now if in an Ecclesia or “flock” one of the sheep goes astray or becomes involved in a moral or doctrinal sin, it is usually a simple matter for the “shepherds” or managing brethren to handle the matter on the basis of Scripture admonition and according to Matthew 18. In such cases the difficulty is a local one, and other Ecclesias need not be drawn into the matter.

But suppose a leading brother, a “shepherd”, goes astray: what is to be done? His “sheep”, with faith in their “shepherd”, will likely follow him in the path of error. It then becomes the duty of other “shepherds” or leading brethren to attempt to remedy the situation; for to overlook the situation is tantamount to approving it. If attempts to restore the “shepherd” who has gone astray fail, then withdrawal or dis-association is the only alternative which remains. And on the basis of 2 John 9-11 there is Scriptural authority for withdrawal from a whole Ecclesia if the “sheep” have endorsed the erroneous stand of their “shepherd”. The language of the verse would allow of its being applied to as many as are guilty of a departure from fundamental doctrines. Certainly it would be an unjust rule which would apply to an individual, but not to several who are guilty of the same thing.

We do not mean by this that it

is the duty of any Ecclesia to meddle in the affairs of another Ecclesia. Ecclesial autonomy has always been a Christadelphian practice, and it is a good one. Still, there are times when Scriptural command may require us to become involved in another Ecclesia's troubles.

On the basis of Ezekiel 33:8-9, previously cited, if a prominent brother in a certain Ecclesia goes astray in doctrine or walk, and his own Ecclesia does nothing about it, it is the duty of sound believers in other Ecclesias to warn the straying one. If the warning is not heeded, the rest of the procedure required in such cases by Matthew 18:15-17 should be carried out first with his home Ecclesia. If his home Ecclesia refuses to deal with him (and it is quite possible that his "flock" will take this attitude), then the matter may become an inter-ecclesial affair. If the issue is serious enough, Scripture principles might require that the whole Ecclesia be withdrawn from as a last resort: the erring brother for doctrinal error or sin, and the Ecclesia (though not in error itself) for violation of 2 John 9-11 and Romans 16:17-18 among others. They have become "accessories after the fact".

This brings us to a very profound observation: If all issues were dealt with promptly and properly on an Ecclesial level, there need never be cause for inter-ecclesial withdrawals.

Certain it is that grave concern and much thought and counselling should precede any course of action which will create a breach between two or more Ecclesias.

How hard we work to make even one convert to our most holy Faith! How very sad to have to withdraw from one or more and have their company lost to us, perhaps forever! We should act only after due deliberation, never in anger. And there should always be a "thus saith the Lord" to sustain our actions.

When an Ecclesia in good standing

has withdrawn from one or more of its own members, or from another Ecclesia, and the grounds for withdrawal have been clearly established, then it is the duty of all other sound believers, everywhere, to sustain the action by refraining from fellowship with the individual or the group shown to be in error. Of course the action may, and probably should, be reviewed by other Ecclesias upholding the action as outlined in Proposition 41 of the Ecclesial Guide. But to disregard the barriers erected by another Ecclesia against sin or doctrinal error is to bring ourselves under the condemnation of 2 John 9-11 and Romans 16:17-18.

If there are members in the Meeting withdrawn from who are sound in every respect except for their support of error, or if the withdrawn-from Meeting itself shows a disposition to repent of its error, we should then eagerly join together in joy at the prospects of working for the restoration of those overtaken in a fault. However, the work should be done in an open, orderly and honorable manner. To arbitrarily or secretly ignore the condition of the disfellowship will only bring additional trouble, because it is not in harmony with Scriptural teaching.

We have set forth these principles of fellowship and withdrawal because we believe them to be God given. They are intended as the first line of defense of both the doctrines able to make us wise unto salvation, and also the high moral commands of our Master. Only by a wise observance of these can brethren of Christ work together in unity, oneness of mind, true fellowship. It would seem to be easier for us to be "broad minded" and tolerant of all differences of views. But this is a mark of the "broad way" that leadeth to destruction. Anything less than adherence to the rules of fellowship given by inspiration will result ultimately in compromise of the Faith, and will pave the

way for the introduction of error and a return to the apostasy. Let us be strong and quit ourselves like men, brethren. Let us be diligent in the Lord's business.

SUMMARY

1. Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). When two or more are gathered together to partake of the Bread and the Wine, as were the brethren, for example, that Paul visited at Troas (Acts 20:6-12), such a gathering is *an Ecclesia*. It matters not if the Ecclesia has existed for a century or more, meeting faithfully each first day of the week; or if it is but a temporary assembly such as a Fraternal Gathering, or the Memorial Service of a Bible School which may meet only once or at most occasionally. It is, nonetheless, by Scriptural definition, an Ecclesia, or assembly of called-out ones.

2. When the Apostles of the Lord founded the earliest Christian Ecclesias, they "appointed elders for them in every congregation (Ecclesia)" (Acts 14:23, Diaglott). On one occasion, the Apostle Paul called together the elders of the Ecclesia of Ephesus, as he was about to take leave of them; and in the course of a farewell discourse he said, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers (bishops), to feed the church (Ecclesia) of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also *of your own selves* shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:28-31).

3. Every Ecclesia, then, whether permanent or temporary, should provide

itself with overseers or elders (arranging brethren), whose duty it shall be to carry out the Apostolic injunction to "watch" over their flock. Or, as John has said, to "try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

4. When the overseers of an Ecclesia discover one who is a "false prophet", whether a visitor or a local member, it is their Scriptural duty to warn the erring one (or ones) as required by Matthew 18:15-17. If the warning is not heeded in the course of patient efforts to reason and persuade, it is then the duty of the Ecclesia to stand aside from those who are in error, until and unless they shall repent of their error.

5. As outlined in section 41 of the "Ecclesial Guide", "no ecclesia ought to receive into fellowship a brother or sister that has been withdrawn from elsewhere". The act of withdrawal by any recognized sound Ecclesia should be carefully respected by all other Ecclesias unless such act of withdrawal can be clearly shown to be unscriptural and unsound.

6. If brethren in Christ are wrongfully separated, owing perhaps to prejudice or mistaken convictions, or when brethren previously in error show evidence of repentance and change for the better, then it becomes the duty of all true believers to seek for reconciliation, unity, reunion, that brethren may again walk together in the bonds of love and peace. But let the reunion be based upon sound and honorable principles openly arrived at. Let not "politics" nor intrigue and duplicity be in any way resorted to; only plain, fair dealing, as though the Master himself were present (which indeed he will be) to see the "thoughts and intents of the heart" of those who are making the necessary arrangements.

Our plea for unity is based upon these sound Scriptural principles.

For only when there is fellowship, sharing in common, based upon these principles, can there ever be true unity.

Finis.

AUTHOR'S NOTE - The foregoing work is the result of a collaborative effort on the part of the author, the ADVOCATE Committee, and other respected brethren in various parts of the brotherhood. Nearly two years have passed since the work was first begun. Every effort has been made not only to compare the writings of able brethren, past and present, upon the subject, but especially to compare Scripture with Scripture, in the hope that the finished work may be useful as a reference upon the Scriptural principles of fellowship. Additional copies are available, and may be had upon request to the author.

Grateful acknowledgement must be made especially to Brethren Paul Safford, L.E. Parker, James W. Goehring, and Lawrence Dodl for their constructive criticisms, encouragement and finally their endorsement of the finished work.

No doubt there will be some who have questions raised in their minds upon the subjects treated here. The author would welcome all such which are presented in the humble attitude of "come let us reason together". Such queries should be addressed to the author whose address appears below. They will be considered jointly by him and the ADVOCATE Committee. Suitable ones will perhaps find their way into the ADVOCATE from time to time, in future issues.

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