
SPECIAL ISSUE

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This Special Issue

With the fellowship question occupying the limelight, the editor of *The GOSPEL GUARDIAN* Fanning Yater Tant, had the problem of sorting and choosing from an overwhelming supply of material submitted for publication. The Arlington, Texas meeting of 1968 had stimulated a great deal of reaction. The "peace offensive" of 1969 better styled "reasoning offensive," created considerable stir. The "pulse of the brethren" showed that there was great interest in reasoning, but none in compromise. Those who saw compromise in the "offensive" were not seeing aright, they misunderstood. Those who welcomed accelerated discussions and renewed communications with "liberal" brethren got the point.

The offensive, planned and inaugurated by editor Tant, served a purpose. New and fresh study was precipitated. This special issue, we believe, presents representative, scholarly, and sound teaching arising from serious study of the question of fellowship by mature thinkers and serious students.

The fog over the matter of fellowship-with-liberals sometimes hangs low, and it is difficult for brethren to be consistent, objective, and impassionate. But we have a feeling that the light of God's word will lead us through safely, although low ceiling sometimes obscures the vision of safe ground on which to land. This special issue of *The GOSPEL GUARDIAN* should contribute much toward clearing the air. We believe it will be well received.

We call your attention to the brief "filler" paragraphs appearing "here and there" in this issue. They contain interesting and relevant information. —Wm. E. Wallace.

PROGNOSIS FOR THE FUTURE

The Shape of Things to Come

FANNING YATER TANT

When Adam pulled his wits together after that hasty exit from the Garden, he might well have turned to his wife with a sad shake of the head and remarked, "Well, Eve, dear, we live in a changing world." It has been such a world from that day to this. And never more so than in this eighth decade of the twentieth century after Christ. The changes now are coming faster, with less and less time for adjustment. Scarcely has one way of life become familiar before it is reversed, re-structured, re-worked, and an entire new pattern is thrust upon us.

All of which is simply a way of saying that the 1970's are coming up with some "changes" in the Church of Christ that will almost literally leave thousands of Christians gasping in disbelief. Those changes are already well under way, having been preceded and prepared for by two decades of preaching and promotion based on an ignoring of (or ignorance of - they aren't the same) some fundamental Bible teachings. As we try to guess what major changes are in prospect, we come up with four general areas of concern:

FELLOWSHIP

This Special Issue of the **GOSPEL GUARDIAN** is devoted to the general subject of "fellowship," and well may it be; for right here is where one of the most fundamental and "stickiest" of all decisions will be made in the 1970's. Briefly put, there is the axiomatic statement that "Every Christian on earth is 'in fellowship' with every other human being on earth who is 'in fellowship' with God." But, upon analysis, that isn't quite as simple as it seems. This still requires a judgment, an assessment, of who is, and who is not 'in fellowship with God.' Are all 'baptized believer,' regardless of the perversions and heresies that may prevail in their worship, church organization, general work and activities to be considered 'in fellowship with God' because of their being 'baptized believers'? This, we believe, is the position now being advocated by such men as Carl Ketcherside, Leroy Garrett, Robert Meyers, and an appreciable number of others.

We anticipate that this sentiment will continue to grow and develop among the majority of Churches of Christ. Beyond all question, there is now taking place a polarization of thinking, a widening of the gulf between 'conservative' and 'liberalistic' elements. The latter group will eventually be considerably in the majority,

and will dominate the policies and practices of most congregations in the future. Before the decade of the 1970's has drawn to a close we believe this basic division will be generally recognized. Some brethren share the opinion of Brother B. C. Goodpasture (editor of the **GOSPEL ADVOCATE**) that perhaps only about ten percent of the churches that now exist will be "lost to modernism;" others, far more realistic in our judgment, place the "probable loss to modernism" at 80 to 90 percent. Liberal elements will control the schools, the publishing houses, the various institutions, and all the larger congregations. Their influence will eventually predominate.

THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

As the breach widens, there will be increasing involvement in "the social gospel" by the more liberal churches. They will put more and more emphasis on 'health education, and welfare,' establishing medical clinics and hospitals, homes for the aged, the deprived children, and unwed mothers. Birth control clinics may well become a routine part of the work of such churches. A wide variety of counseling services, employment agencies, inner city missions, summer camps and recreation centers all the varied activities of general social welfare agencies will increasingly occupy the thought and effort of these churches. Emphasis on heaven and hell, on salvation and eternal damnation on the cross of Christ, the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, and all the traditional themes of the past will gradually subside. This will not take place, of course, in any big way in the 1970's; but we doubt not that the beginnings of such trends will be clearly discernible. Indeed, they are so already. Church supported schools, from kindergarten through college level will almost certainly proliferate.

CENTRALIZED COOPERATIVES

Missionary organizations and arrangements will progress from the relatively simple "sponsoring church" plan to far more elaborate and more highly organized endeavors. The Herald of Truth program and its support and control gives a fair preview of what may be expected in other such works. There will be regional directors, state directors, annual "workshops" or conferences at which policies and practices will be discussed and decisions made. This is already in progress with such projects as various Bible School workshops, elders' workshops, cooperative orphan home executive councils, church related school administrators meetings, etc.

The long history of all such gatherings is that they do NOT gradually dissolve and go out of existence, but that they continue to take over more and more control of the various component units, until finally there comes to be one recognized authoritative controlling agency, eldership, or centralized arrangement. Control is

most usually exercised through moral persuasion rather than legal reality; but in either case, whether by legal provisions or through moral coercion, the ultimate control is rigid and firm.

'THE REMNANT'

As has almost invariably been the case in apostasies, there will be a 'remnant' who will remain relatively faithful to their original stance. Whether or not there will be the possibility of any closer and more effective working fellowship between this 'remnant' from the forthcoming explosion and those who constituted the 'remnant' from the division of the 1950% remains to be seen. Hopefully (and probably) there can emerge a happier and healthier relationship. In both divisions, that of the 1950's and that now forthcoming in the 1970's, the point at issue was, and is, the question as to the ultimate and final authority of Bible teaching. Minor differences will probably always exist over questions of interpretation, but the major differences have always come not over interpretation but over authority. It will be so again.

At any rate, many scores of thousands of sincere and dedicated Christians will continue on the even tenor of their way, serving God with all fidelity, humbly seeking each day to discharge that day's obligation to the Creator, and looking forward with confidence "to his appearing."

Being neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, this editor as an ordinary work-a-day scribe has here set down his educated guess (it can not really be anything more than that) as to 'the shape of things to come.'

"I propose to fellowship any child of God in any practice wherein I believe God fellowships those so teaching and practicing. By the same token, I propose to refrain from any fellowship of any teaching or practice which I conceive to lie outside the limits of that He sanctions."

The Fellowship of The Saints

BRYAN VINSON, SR.

This subject is one which should hold a great interest in the thoughts and affections of every child of God. It is not unlikely that, should there have been that measure of interest in and understanding of the scriptures bearing on this matter, the conditions now prevailing in the church would never have been brought to pass. Hence, we would today be enjoying a fellowship as brethren of the Lord that does not exist. If anyone can, therefore, contribute to an enlarged and clearer conception of the truth as related to this subject, he will be performing a service rich in value and salutary in effect. While cherishing no high degree of confidence I shall be able to do so, yet for whatever worth it may possess I wish to submit my thoughts and reflections on this theme. I do so in response to a request and invitation by brother William Wallace, for publication in this periodical.

No effort shall be made to exhaust every passage bearing on this subject, or to examine every occurrence of the terms from which it or an equivalent word in the scriptures is found. To attempt to do so would be unnecessarily tedious for me, and equally so for the reader; and would, in the final analysis, contribute little or nothing toward securing the proper conclusions.

Bound Together By Common Interest

In the Ephesian letter the apostle depicted the formation of the body of Christ out of the two principal and dissident contingents of mankind, the Jews and the Gentiles. To them he said: "Now then ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens, with the saints and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (2:19-22) The point I wish to notice first is the statement to the effect that, however alien and foreign these people were before, they are now fellow-citizens. The idea of citizenship thus intrudes itself into our thinking, and this involves the matter of government, its nature and the relation each citizen sustains to this government. A prophet of old foretold that the government should be upon his shoulders; that is, the Messiah. Hence, being fellow citizens, every citizen, be he Jew or Gentile, sustains an equal relation to the Lord of heaven and earth, the head of the church and the king of the kingdom. This relationship is one that involves an equal obligation to be wholly governed by Him, and completely dependent on Him. Consequently, there can be no intervening force or power employed by anyone or ones within the kingdom to either create or dissolve any con-

ditions affecting this proper relationship between the citizen and the government of the King, or that between the citizens themselves. This being true, then, except the King has prescribed the term or condition establishing, altering or dissolving this community of interest, action and blessings, woe be to those who presumptuously engage to create such.

The term fellow reflects the thought that of an equality in sharing the blessings identified with the relation existing, and, commensurate with the ability and opportunity existing, sharing the obligations and duties in bent on a given association or fraternity. No one should consent to being a member of any order apart from a recognition and assumption of the duties enjoined. Further, no one should arbitrarily be deprived of any of the advantages and blessings identified therewith. In labor unions, in political parties, and doubtless in many other bodies selfish interests are displayed by those who aspire for personal gain or power; in the kingdom of Christ, such manifestations are incomparably more reprehensible.

In considering the subject of fellowship in any area of human association, it is basic that recognition be given to the purpose of the association thus formed. In the multiple interests of our mundane existence there are associations many and varied. Political, social, business and cultural interests each have their instrumentalities in the form of collective efforts to advance the particular objectives, and the inducement to become members is predicated on these common objectives. This being recognized, what is the common interest which binds together those who axe citizens of the kingdom of heaven?

This common interest can be simply stated in Us ultimate form of reaching heaven at last and there living eternally in the felicity and joy offered by the presence of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, angels and the redeemed of all ages. This is the noblest aspiration of the soul, and transcends all temporal and material interests far beyond our power to compare. Then, it should be evident to all that with such in store for those whose citizenship is in heaven, that nothing should be allowed to intrude itself into the thinking, the affections and the interests of God's children to becloud this prospect, or mar the relations righteously existing between those cherishing this one hope.

Dissolution Of Relationship

In reading the early history of the followers of Christ, as recorded by inspiration, one is understandably fascinated by the warmth and closeness of the relation they sustained toward one another. Such apostolic instructions as "let love be without dissimulation;" "in honor preferring one another;" "love as brethren;" "let brotherly love continue," and a host of others similar in content - all are born of the deep and pervading consciousness of the singular and supreme interest and aspiration held

in common by those who have been born again. In just such an atmosphere we can appreciate thrillingly the moving appeal to the Ephesian saints to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. The underlying, pervading and effective instrumentalities enumerated by him to secure this preservation of unity, calls into activity those fraternal affections that everywhere are enjoined upon the children of the Father.

The individual relation of one to God, having become a follower of Christ through obedience to His will, is that relation of a child; and this being formed there is correspondingly formed between such a one, and all others who have likewise been constituted God's children, that relation of brothers. Brotherhood rests on the antecedent one of childhood. We are brethren because we are the children of God. This recognized, can that be dissolved without this having any bearing on effecting such dissolution? That is, can any proper alteration be made between the fraternal relations of the children as brethren, which is not provoked or warranted from a changed relation with the Father? Are the children justified in severing their relation with other brethren, except as there has been an alteration of those brethren's standing with God? Can I say I will not fellowship a child of God whom the Father fellowships? If so, why? Also, can I rightly fellowship a brother whom the Father refuses to fellowship? I believe both these must be answered negatively.

Until, then, one has been brought into fellowship with God and Christ he is not to be fellowshipped by those who are Christians, as Christians. Believing, as I do, that Christian may belong to some human organizations of non-religious nature, he may in those relations fellowship those who are not Christians. But no fellowship of a religious nature is to be engaged in between a Christian and those who aren't in covenant relation with the Lord.

Evidently this was not the persuasion of some in Corinth, as indicated by the strong language of Paul to them: "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." 2 Cor. 6:14-18. It must be evident to anyone who reads this that some of the saints in Corinth were contaminating themselves with an identification in idolatry and with those thus practicing such. No continuation therein was tolerable, and a complete severance of themselves from all such was required, and the promised reception of sons and daughters was conditioned on them doing so. In this address we see the line drawn

clear and strong between those who are God's children on the one hand and those who are not on the other; and that any fellowship between them where such involves fidelity to God is viewed by Him as utterly intolerable. It forbids any service or worship professedly engaged in by an amalgam of believers and unbelievers. The whole tenor of the prohibition thus stated conveys the thought that God views those addressed as His, peculiarly and separately so, and therefore any association with the unregenerate in religious interprises to be an act of disloyalty to the Father. The force of this passage is emphatic and far-reaching in its application even in our day. It is a clear injunction against Christians joining with unbelievers to take up collections for the Salvation Army, as is done on the streets of our towns. It restricts Christians belonging to the Masonic Lodge, because they engage in religious activities.

Terminology

Notice is merited to be given to the terms herein employed: fellowship, communion, concord, part, and agreement. These terms, essentially, are synonymical in import: a holding with, partner; using a thing in common; a sounding together; a portion; a putting down together hence, is seen the idea generally of togetherness identified throughout.

Underlying all joint action is the antecedently formed relationship, and therefore this constitutes a state of fellowship with one another, and so long as they act in harmonious concert in any given action there is the practice of fellowship. This fellowship in this state of oneness as the family of God should be so esteemed by every Christian as to restrain every inclination or impulse to jeopardize it by asserting and striving to impose personal opinions and preferences in the worship and service rendered to God in joint action with other brethren. This is the point wherein dangers always arise to imperil the basic fellowship of all of God's children.

Subverting Relationship

We have advanced the position that fellowship is primarily or basically a matter of relationship. That is, the parties involved in any active form of fellowship must first become related to one another in such a way as to afford the occasion for the given action jointly engaged in. When, then, such actions are pursued that a divergence is created and any antagonism develops, it reacts adversely on the basic relationship which preceded and existed in reference to a joint participation and sharing by the parties constituting the fellowship. Should not a mature appreciation of this obvious fact act as a strongly repelling force against brethren ever becoming so attached to any given course, however attractive to them it may be, that would subvert this basic relationship?

In appraising the magnitude and blessedness of this relationship as creating and limiting this fellowship, one but needs to reflect on the truths bearing on the point of the Divine participation therein. In Paul's entreaty to the Corinthians to receive not the grace of God in vain, he prefaced with the words: "we then as workers together with Him beseech you . . ." Here is presented the thought that the posture he here takes is so magnificent that any appeal issued from this position must secure a ready acceptance and call forth a favorable response. This identification of himself as a worker together with the Lord invests any appeal he might make with a persuasive power that is irresistible to every God-fearing Christian to whom it was or may be addressed. The thought that a Christian is in copartnership with God, Christ and the Holy Spirit is as elevated a conception as can be possessed by man. Think of how many persons are willing to make personal sacrifices for the glory and fame which comes from being associates and collaborators with a chief of state in Washington! Such an affiliation and association falls far beneath that of the simple Christian who is joined to the Lord; and, in this relation shares with Him in a work of faith and labor of love in the promotion of the cause for which He died.

This fellowship between the redeemed and the redeemer is acknowledged by John as follows: "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." I John 1:3. One can easily see that the desirability of the fellowship between John and those addressed rests on the antecedent consideration that he was in fellowship with God and Christ. Any spiritual fellowship between men should always be predicated on their fellowship with the Father of their spirits. Also, there is the expressed recognition by the writer that the contemplated fellowship was suspended on a knowledge of that declared by the apostles. "We declare - that you may have fellowship." A knowledge and conviction of the truth is necessary to afford the occasion and give substance to this fellowship. No other relation is formed on or sustained by this body of truth. Verily, he that hath known the Father hath known the Son! John further affirms that God is light, and that in Him there is no darkness at all; and, this being true, if one affirms he has fellowship with God, and walks in darkness, he lies. I doubt not there are millions who today fall under this sentence, while honestly thinking they are truly in this fellowship.

The Ephesians were straitly enjoined to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but to reprove them. Light and darkness are terms freely employed to denote, respectively, knowledge and ignorance, and good and evil. The immediate context of this statement indicates that the works of darkness were those of an immoral nature too shameful to speak of, but certainly the quality of darkness is not exhausted by the realm of the immoral. Any work unauthorized which is done as professed obedience to the Lord is essentially a work of darkness.

What does the walking in darkness embody, that John spoke of, which would not embrace any activity violative of the will of God, including both the moral and spiritual law? Paul's statement does not simply involve an abstinence from participation or fellowship in such works, but also enjoins an outright opposition or reproof of them—that is the works. A faithful Christian cannot, therefore, maintain a non-committed attitude toward either truth or error. Multitudes of God's children likely are maintaining a course of silence toward teachings and practices which they regard as a breach of the law of Christ solely out of a desire to maintain an association and fellowship with those so doing. This is a position, in being pursued, strikingly like that of those who believed in Christ but would not confess Him lest they be put out of the synagogue, because they loved the praises of men more than the favor of God. These could not be saved in the position in which this statement depicts them, and one cannot but be fearful of those who are governed by the same craven spirit today.

Breaking Fellowship - Extremes

There has been displayed, I think, too great a readiness on the part of many, however, to break fellowship with their brethren without having weighed the gravity of the consequences involved by such hasty action. Such reflects a lack of consideration, and an immature appreciation of the basic state of fellowship created in Christ as existing by virtue of being in Him. "God is faithful through whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord," 1 Cor. 1:9. Since God is he who called us into this fellowship, we should be very careful in endeavoring to exclude those He has thus called. Since He has prescribed the terms embodied in this call, we should not act rashly - and vainly - in either altering them or negating them by our alleged right of action. The present scene presents two very diverse and extreme views of this whole matter. With them I wish to deal to the end they each may be seen its true character. We have, on the one hand, the position being promoted by brother Carl Ketcherside in which he makes the matter of fellowship wholly one of relationship. With him it's entirely an "in" thing. And in his definition of that which constitutes the grounds of being brought into this relationship of fellowship, he is more liberal and less exacting than is warranted by the scriptures. His position, as determined by his statements, is that the gospel relates to fellowship, whereas the doctrine does not; that one who believes the good news relating to Christ, and is immersed, for the general intent of 'obeying the Lord' even though in so doing he denies that baptism is in order to the remission of sins, is translated into this fellowship, regardless of doctrinal errors then or subsequently held. From this premise he reasons that whatever divergent views may exist or unauthorized practices be followed, those so doing are in the fellowship! He includes the people constituting the Baptist denomination within this fellowship, and presumably all other denominations who immerse rather than sprinkle. He identifies the virtue of baptism to be wholly transitive apart from any motive,

purpose, or design connected with it. Any student of the scriptures should readily perceive that God not only takes cognizance of that done but also of the intent or motive provoking the action performed. To reason that the validity of baptism is independent of the expressed design of "for the remission of sins," would entail the assumption that when the Lord said "this do in remembrance of me," the acceptability of eating the loaf and drinking the cup is to no degree suspended on remembering Him while and in so doing. There is no greater fallacy in reasoning than that of assuming that either an act is competent apart from motivation, or this apart from that. Multitudes have reasoned that so long as the intention is laudable and sincerity is present, the failure to do the thing prescribed, or to substitute a humanly preferable action, that God accepts the unauthorized act as rendered virtuous by the sincerity existing. Brother Ketcherside falls in to this error in reverse form on the point of baptism for the remission of sins.

The ecumenical movement developing in the religious world, in which efforts of denominations to get closer together, and in turn to establish a measure of rapport with Roman Catholicism, is now reaching out to find those involved endeavoring to embrace Judaism as a divinely recognized and accepted religion. No man who believes that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah can, while so believing, accept those who deny Him as being in covenant relation with God. This spreading movement may well be influencing some within the church to the point they are becoming imbued with an inclination to recognize at least the Protestant denominations as the children of God. There is a radical difference in the point of view of Campbell and his contemporaries that there were, in their day, Christians in the denominations, and that denominationalism is Christian. Further, much discussion was provoked by the contention of some that the pious unimmersed could partake of the Lord's Supper! This met immediate and competent refutation by Lard and others.

This extremely latitudinarian position of brother Ketcherside likely will find increasingly an acceptancy by some members of the church, and more particularly among the self esteemed intelligentsia. The restrictions of the scriptures will become more and more galling to them, even as it did with the same class a hundred years ago. While doubtless several factors can well be conceived as contributing to such a changing attitude, yet I am persuaded that the two most influential are, first, the developing insensitivity of a need for authority revealed in the New Testament for all that we do and teach in the name of the Lord; and, second, a reversion against the narrow and Pharisaical prescriptiveness that has fractured the family of God so much. Of this condition it is in order to speak somewhat at length. The havoc it has wrought is fearful beyond description, and in some respects irreparable.

The Other Extreme

This condition is the other extreme of that one just noted, and is equally untenable. It rests on a different premise than the first one; that one that fellowship is wholly a condition of state or relationship, and this one that it is wholly one of agreement in doctrine and practice. I sincerely believe both these views to be wrong, and that the matter of fellowship in the church involves a proper recognition of both aspects, and when a proper balance is secured in our thinking of the force of each respectively we will be able to respond more correctly *and* righteously in effecting a solution to any problems arising in the area of fellowship.

Any practical advantage to be derived from a study of this subject is dependent on an application of its principles to the problems created by the differences which have arisen between brethren, both in times past and in the present. Resting on the basic concept of being in fellowship are the numerous appeals found in the apostolic writings directed toward maintaining the peace and unity which originally characterized the body of believers. It is this underlying relation of a fraternal fellowship which gives substance to these appeals. Today there are heard those voices in advocacy of "unity in diversity," portraying as neither attainable nor desirable a complete unity in agreement. This contention is in direct conflict with the instruction to the Corinthian saints to , "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," I Cor. 1:10. This follows immediately the affirmation to the effect God had called them into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ the Lord! Hence, the relationship they sustained to the Lord, and to one another in consequence, makes imperative the complete harmony of attitude and disposition, resulting in a oneness of judgment and speech. This is the uniformity prescribed by inspired instruction.

While recognizing this as the goal to be sought and attained, there is the realistic recognition that it does not now exist. At one point in the history of God's family it did exist. Acts 4:32. "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." This doctrine, however, of unity in diversity as it is applied today not only recognizes the existence of differences but apologizes for them and accepts them as irremovable and even desirable. This reflects against the wisdom of these passages as divinely given. Nonetheless, being confronted with the presence of these differences, and believing they should be removed, what should be the feelings and demeanor of brethren toward one another in the presence of these differences? It would be difficult for me to believe that the personal resentments,, finding expression in the treatment brethren have accorded one another. arises from any source other than an unwarranted sense of self-importance, vanity and egotism. On no rational basis can one justify a sense of resentment toward another person for differing in any point of individual persuasion or conviction as touching the truth of any matter. To take umbrage toward one who differs with me on any point of teaching implies that I am so superior to him that he is failing to recognize

this in taking issue with me, and therefore his impudence is to be rightfully resented!

So, then, if there obtains a proper estimate of our common worth before God, while differences exist we will be duly considerate of the just interests of one another. If this had been true in periods of stress fellowship would not have been broken so rashly as has been the case. An atmosphere of arrogance has been generated and a spirit of intolerance has been displayed to the hurt of the church, both in the past and present. Tolbert Fanning was a man of strong character and deep conviction, and while opposing that which brethren were advocating in his time, he sought resolutely to maintain the fellowship between brethren of divergent persuasions. "Tolbert Fanning spent himself totally in trying to cultivate unity in soil hardened by alienation" (Pg. 193, **Hazard of The Die**), "In 1859, determined to do all which was humanly possible to maintain an unobstructed rapport between himself and his society brethren, Fanning had attended the annual national meeting of the American Christian Society in Cincinnati. Ten years had elapsed since the first convention. Fanning was determined to express his concern but at the same time to continue to fellowship those with whom he differed." (Ibid.) He sought and finally secured an opportunity to address this gathering. "Consultation in Tennessee had brought unity among those who were previously divided. Surely his friends here were capable of the same calm deliberation toward such peaceful fruit. At the close of Fanning's remarks, however, Isaac Errett was immediately on his feet with a resolution" the effect of which was to stifle any further discussion of differences.

There was published in 1901 a book titled, "Reformation of the Nineteenth Century," a series of historical sketches by different writers under different sub-heads. One section by W. T. Moore was styled "The Turbulent Period," in which he gives his estimate of that period covering the controversies arising over the Missionary Society and Instrumental Music in the Worship issues. On page 206-207 we read: "Nevertheless, be it said to the credit of the Disciples that the heresy hunters have, for the most part, received scanty approbation, and upon the whole it cannot be denied that the spirit of the churches has always been in harmony with the great principles upon which the Reformation was founded. It is also true that most of the men in this movement who have made much impression upon their contemporaries, have been men who have always advocated a liberal policy both within and without the communion. Before the sixth decade of the present century had ended, the battle for liberty had been practically won, and consequently since that time the flowing tide has always been with those who believe in freedom of thought, freedom of speech and the right of individual interpretation." Those identified as the principal heresy hunters were Benjamin Franklin and Moses E. Lard in their periodicals, the American Christian Review and the Quarterly. These two, with Tolbert Fanning, constitute the principal ones against whom the venom of Moore was directed.

This brief allusion to the past but illustrates the spirit of innovationists as it relates to an utter insensitiveness of the gravity of division. Just so the majority can be gained in the course prescribed as progress and liberalism, then it matters not at all what the dissenters think or feel. Such is the history of the church in that period of turbulence, and the smug self-satisfaction which characterized the Moore's, the Erett's, and the Burnett's of that time. The present has their counterparts in men now; those who have placed, apparently at preference for what they conceive to be their liberty in Christ above the fellowship graciously provided by God in this Christ.

A Recommendation

Benjamin Franklin is quoted in this history as advising a course which is viewed by the writer to be a temperate one: "Declare non-fellowship with no one, say nothing about refusing fellowship, or leaving the church, or withdrawing from it. But deliberately and quietly meet in another place of worship regularly according to the scriptures. Attend to the breaking of the loaf, the apostles' teaching, prayers, praise and contribution. Worship in spirit and in truth. Talk of no new church, second church, nor anything of the kind." It is my judgment that not only was this a temperate but wise course urged by Franklin, and one which, if followed both then and in the present period of differences, would have been better for all concerned. It would have pin-pointed the area of differences without gendering a climate of ill-will, at least to the degree then or now existing. Too, it would have brought into sharper focus a distinction between a state of fellowship in Christ, and the matter of having fellowship with some in that fellowship in the practices in dispute. The idea that at the very point wherein we cannot engage with other brethren in a given activity that each is warranted in concluding the other to be out of the fellowship which theretofore they were in is, I think, a fallacy.

Inasmuch as God is the one who places us in the fellowship of His Son, it would be safe for us to refrain from assuming the prerogative of putting any out of this fellowship. When the editor of the **GOSPEL ADVOCATE** recommended a tag of quarantine to be placed on all who would not fellowship him and like-minded brethren in the practice of those matters, he, in effect, assumed this prerogative and thus displayed a rashness that doesn't compliment his intelligence or his piety. When some of the ones against whom he "legislated" over-reacted in ceasing to countenance those with whom they differed as brethren in the Lord, they compounded the error and further perpetuated it.

In more recent times efforts have been made to repair the damage done, and to set in operation a course of renewed communication and exchange of views between the two dissident groups. The Arlington, Texas (1968), meeting, having such a

purpose, has been subjected to suspicious criticisms by some who were not there, and who regarded any association with those of the contrary part to be a compromise. To me it appears that some think it is a betrayal of the truth to meet with others within the family of God and unite in any activity of worship, such as singing and praying. Only on the assumption that God has cast them out of His family could any reasoning of a deserving kind lead to such a conclusion. This assumption I do not accept. I regard them as brethren, and any break of fellowship between them and me is one that exists by reason of their rejection of me for not doing that, or accepting as proper the doing of that, which I sincerely believe to lie beyond the perimeter of divine authorization. For such a break the responsibility must inevitably be theirs, and not mine. It is this view of the subject that occasioned the remark of some able brethren to the effect they had not been under any necessity to be concerned about fellowship inasmuch as the advocates of the things in dispute have taken care of it.

Brother Ketcherside claims to fellowship all the differing groups within the "Restoration Movement," but the thing which I have wondered about is how many and which ones fellowship him! With me the course is reasonably simple. I propose to fellowship any child of God in any point of teaching and practice wherein I believe God fellowships those so teaching and practicing. By the same token, I propose to refrain from any fellowship of any teaching or practice which I conceive to lie outside the limits of that He sanctions. The determination is of necessity personal, because the responsibility is personal. No man who has a becoming regard for God can knowingly go beyond the Word of God to do anything whether in so doing or not men approve or disapprove the thing done. But, even so acting on this principle, we should guard against any self-intoxicating heroics which can hallucinate one into thinking except others cross every "t" and dots every "i" as he does he has become reprobate to the faith. Good and sincere men can and do differ despite the fact the scriptures are designed, in the light afforded and the directives given, that there be no differences among us. To them recourse alone can and should be made to resolve every difference, and pending such an end we should strive to be humble children of God, and brethren one of another.

Individual and Collective Fellowship

In this, the final piece of this series on the subject of fellowship, attention is directed toward one important area, which involves a distinction between individual and collective action, or joint action. The practical aspect of this subject finds application in the matter of what one does in conjunction with one or more others. It is true that there may be an individual action of such a nature that would react so

adversely on the spiritual and/or moral character of a fellow citizen that it would prevent any joint participation with him in our service and worship. The instruction to the Corinthians advising a putting away from themselves the incestuous brother affords a case of this kind. There is nothing intimated against this person as bearing on his faithful attendance of the worshiping assembly, or of his acceptance of all the truth taught by the apostles on the spiritual level. His was a gross corruption of the moral sensibilities that must be rejected by all Christians. Hence, until he repented he was not to be countenanced by the other followers of Christ there. Less attention is being given today to this area of behaviour as affecting the fellowship of the saints and the good name of the congregations of the Lord than should be the case. Nothing can be more disgusting, nauseous and utterly absurd than the disposition which has been evidenced by some to esteem a brother, with whom they differ on these points of current issue, to be unworthy to pray in the assembly, and yet harbor as front rank members those with multiple marriages, and those whose reputation is questionable in business dealings. Liars, gossipers and character assassins, cheats and adulterers are rarely exposed and rejected by any congregations today, so far as I know.

In the realm of one's knowledge of the truth where differences exist as to what the truth is the point of continued or broken fellowship may well turn on whether the point of difference has a bearing on what we are to do individually or jointly. There are many questions of what the scriptures are believed to teach wherein those differing continue in full recognition and fellowship of one another. Through the years brethren have held contrary persuasions on whether a Christian can bear arms in defense of his country. During and immediately following the Civil war the church was sorely tried as to whether brethren would divide over the issues of that conflict, but, happily, unlike the prominent denominations division didn't occur. Basically, the reason for this is found in the fact that this conviction embodies a matter of individual action, and any brother is not drawn into any assumed guilt which might attach to a brother of the contrary part. However, political resolutions were presented and passed in a convention of the Missionary Society during that war. Listen to Lard:

"MISSIONARY SOCIETIES ARE DANGEROUS INSTITUTIONS. NOT IN THEMSELVES, OF COURSE, OR WHEN DOING RIGHT, OR ACTING WITHIN THEIR OWN PROPER BOUNCE; BUT DANGEROUS BECAUSE OF THEIR EXTREME LIABILITY TO USURP POWER WHICH DOES NOT BELONG TO THEM, AND TO PERFORM ACTS HURTFUL AND OPPRESSIVE TO THE FEELINGS OF GOD'S CHILDREN, WHICH THEY CANNOT LAWFULLY PERFORM. NO MAN LIVING CAN SAY THAT THE DANGER HERE DOES NOT EXIST, OR THAT IS IMAGINARY TENDENCY OF ALL HUMAN INSTITUTIONS, ESPECIALLY OF ALL MONEYED AND CHARTERED INSTITUTIONS, IS TO AUGMENT CONTINUALLY THEIR POWER,

THAT THEREBY THEY MAY BECOME THE MORE EFFECTIVE IN THEIR OPERATIONS. THIS IS PERFECTLY NATURAL; NOR CAN IT BE PRO- NOUNCED ABSOLUTELY WRONG. BUT JUST HERE THE DANGER AP- PEARs. LET NOW ANYONE, NO MATTER WHO HE MAY BE, OR FROM WHAT MOTIVES HE MAY ACT, RISE UP TO OPPOSE THESE INSTITU- TIONS, AND NOT MORE NATURALLY DOES THE WILD BEAST DEFEND TO THE DEATH HER YOUNG THAN DO THEY SEEK TO MAIM OR CRUSH THE INTERFERING PARTY BUT THE DANGEROUS FEATURES LIE, NOT IN THEIR EFFORTS TO PRESERVE THEMSELVES, BUT IN THEIR USURPATION AND USE OF UNWARRANTABLE POWER. AS A MOURNFUL AND HUMILIATING ILLUSTRATION OF WHAT IS HERE SAID, WE HAVE ONLY TO REFER TO THE ACTION OF OUR OWN GEN- ERAL MISSIONARY SOCIETY, WITHIN THE TWO YEARS PRECEDING THE PAST, IN TURNING ASIDE TO PASS RESOLUTIONS EXPRESSIVE OF THE POLITICAL FEELINGS OF A MAJORITY OF THOSE THEN PRESENT, TO THE PAIN AND GRIEF OF REMONSTRATING AND DISSENTING BRETHREN. IN THIS ACT THE FEELINGS, NOT MERELY OF YOUNG MEN WITH HIGH BLOOD, BUT OF VENERABLE MEN WHOSE WHOLE GRAND LIVES HAD BEEN GIVEN TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST. NOT EVEN EXCEPTING THOSE OF THE PATRIARCHAL PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY, WERE RUDELY DISREGARDED AND TRAMPLED UPON. BOYS AND WOMEN THERE CAST VOTES, AND RUSHED THE PAPERS THROUGH, WHILE MEN LIKE JOHN SMITH HUNG THEIR HEADS IN SHAME." (LARD'S QUARTERLY, VOL. 2, PAGE 138)

This has been cited to show how serious this issue was, and, too, how the Society forces were determined to rule the kingdom of heaven! But the point is, that even in time of such high passions and severe tensions, the fact that this was essentially an individual matter, one to be personally determined by the individual, and car- ried no others along with the decision, is what saved the church from dividing over the Civil war and its issues. I know brethren with whom I differ on this and other things which are wholly identified as of individual determination of duty, and so far as I am concerned it has never ill-effected my feelings toward or my esteem for them. However, I have had a meeting canceled because it was learned my views on the war question didn't coincide with the ruling sentiment there, and in another instance a meeting was opposed with me because of my views on I Cor. 11:1-16. But I am sure these are rather rare instances with any of us. One brother told me that if his views on this teaching in Corinthians were the same as mine, he would have every woman who didn't comply therewith withdrawn from! I think he is en- tirely sincere, but equally and fully as wrong as he is sincere. Whatever the views and practice may be, it remains one of individual determination and action, im- pinging on no others differing therefrom.

But when we come to the area of those actions or practices which grow out of our teaching, and involving necessarily a joint action by the members of a congregation, the restraints must be more clearly recognized and cautiously respected. I have a duty, as opportunity exists, to teach what I conceive to be the truth on any and every matter within Divine Revelation; that is, as clearly taught therein. But if it requires individual response, then I am not guilty of an imposition on the congregation; consequently, any and every individual is left to his own free choice to believe and respond to such teaching, or to personally reject it. In either case my acceptance or rejection by the Lord is entirely independent and apart from the acceptance or rejection of that taught by any (me or all who have been extended the teaching. Also, their acceptance or rejection by the Lord turns, just as does mine, on the truth and relevance of that taught. So, then, there is no ground for a cleavage. However, if that which I teach involves, in its acceptance, the collective response of the congregation, there must be a uniformity of believing or disbelieving that taught, if the congregation is to be spared the danger of differences being created. Viewing, then, this as a proposed course of teaching carrying the likelihood of resulting in an internal cleavage, one should be fully persuaded that the thing taught must be practiced by the church at the peril of their souls! No mere expeditious course of action warrants this grave a risk. However, one may counter, why should one side be forbidden to present Us position out of deference to the feelings of the other. If it be a matter of opinion, it should be kept as private property; if viewed as being in the category of matters of faith, it should be taught, and both sides should be heard. Discussion should continue until truth has been elicited, and good will, concord and fellowship should be maintained throughout. But when one side seeks to silence the other side, simply by the force of superior numbers, or the alleged prerogative of elders, fellowship cannot be maintained. And one cannot forego the strong suspicion that when either side is fearful of the other being heard, such is indicative of the conscious weakness of their position. I cannot believe that one feels secure in his persuasion of the truth on any question who fears a full and candid examination of the grounds on which he rests his persuasion.

That is why I have ever believed those who have advocated the practices in dispute, have felt a sense of weakness and thus have warned brethren against hearing the opposition. Editors, elders and preachers have done this many times throughout the period of controversy. It has rendered difficult any re-establishment of communication between the two groups of brethren. Suspicions have been aroused and distrust has been cultivated between the two groups of brethren. Efforts have been made to bridge these chasms, but it is my observation that too many on both sides are too well pleased with conditions as they are to be hopeful of much success. I have an opinion as to why this is true, and for different reasons for each group, but being an advocate of the contention we should hold our opinions as private property, I'll adhere to this principle in this particular!

Conclusion and Summary

In conclusion, may I summarize as follows: We are all called into the fellowship of God's Son in being called by the gospel, and therefore enter into this fellowship when, and on the terms prescribed, we obey this gospel. In this state of fellowship we are workers together with God, Christ and the Holy Spirit in promoting the accomplishment of human redemption from sin, and ultimately salvation in heaven. Just so long as we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we have fellowship one with another. We can be in fellowship - and are - without necessarily having fellowship in every area of activity in which other brethren engage. If this were not true I cannot conceive how anyone can claim to be in fellowship with any other brother! Why? Because I doubt that there is a single one of us completely, one hundred per cent, in agreement both in faith and practice, both jointly and singly, with any other one. If I am conscious of having sinned, and any of you, conceding this to be true, would not fellowship me in the thing I have done that is wrong, would you? Then, if you can not be in fellowship with one whom you do not have complete fellowship with in every act of his, you are in fellowship with no one. Hence, I conclude, that I can participate with brethren in some things which are right without participating with them in other things I consider to be wrong; and more especially should this have been true of our course when we each were endeavoring to determine who has the truth on those things which are in dispute. I have been asked, was the fellowship at Arlington social or spiritual. Others can speak for themselves who were there; with me, when spiritual songs were sung and prayers offered to God, it was a spiritual fellowship, and whether the worship of others was accepted or not, is a matter I leave with God.

"There is no legitimate escape from the differences that must exist between imperfect men, as they search for truth, and find themselves at different levels of understanding. . . . fellowship is not so much negated by that difference as by the differing attitudes that accompany it. Nor have we helped the matter by seeking to whittle God's standard down to size."

To Call Them "Brethren"!!!

ROBERT F. TURNER

"For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." (Heb. 2: 11) Have you allowed the marvelous depths of this statement to touch you? God has made it possible for us creatures to be "one" with the Creator; through sanctification in Christ, to call us "brethren." This is "fellowship."

WORD STUDY

"Fellowship" is one of the English words used to translate *koinonia*, a Greek word meaning "association" or "partnership." It is used in colloquial Greek for (1) business partnership; (2) marriage (*koinonia* of life); and (3) man's relationship with Zeus. (Barclay, N. T. Words.) The verb form means to "have a share in a thing." This may be to share in an action with someone; sharing in a common possession; or the "sharing of life." In the New Testament (K.J.) the verb form is translated "distribute," "communicate," and "partake." The noun form is translated "fellowship," "contribution," "communion," and "distribution." A similar noun, *koinonos*, is translated partakers, "partners," "fellowship" and "companions."

Other writers of this special issue will likely give more attention to word study, but I have overlapped this much to show that the fundamental idea of "sharing" may be applied both to conscious partnership (where some mutual agreement between the parties in fellowship is implied - a deliberate sharing by choice) and to a position held in common by two or more, whether by choice or otherwise. (Note Heb. 2:14 "the children are partakers of flesh and blood" - "sharers in" AS.) Without deliberately willing a partnership, we may, by like conduct, "share" common ground with sinners - or Satan. (I Cor. 10:18-20, 1 Tim. 5:22, 2 Jn. 11.) In English, "fellowship" is a "ship" of "fellows;" the latter word meaning "alike" or "equal to," "of the same kind." Fellow-creature means one of the same race or kind. Fellow-servants means two or more servants employed together. The word "fellow" is often used in English to translate the Greek "sun" or "sum" - a prefix meaning "with." (Fellow-citizens, fellow-disciple, fellow-heir, etc. Eph. 2:19, Jn. 11-16, Eph. 3:6)

WALKING IN LIGHT

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD is possible only for those who conform to the image of His Son, (Rom. 8:29)—who are God-like in their character, as well as in overt obedience. This is clearly shown in I Jn. 1:5f. where we are told that "God is light,

and in Him is no darkness at all." Light is a very essence of God, an attribute like omnipotence, and love. Since there is no compatibility between light and darkness ("What communion hath light with darkness?") "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." Fellowship with God is no fixed tie, organic or otherwise. No act nor series of acts can purchase a life membership. It is a relationship, demanding constant and continuous "walking in the light" on our part. (Compare, "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous." I Jn. 3:7) There was never a more sectarian error than the fallacious and damaging conclusion that being a "member in good standing" among the people of the church, means one is in fellowship with God.

CHILDREN OF GOD

We have overlooked a significant aspect of the "child of God" figure, by emphasizing how one becomes a child, to the de-emphasis of being a child of God. It may help to remember that I John 1:5f was written for people already baptized - born - and considering themselves in fellowship with God. There were children of Abraham, physically, who partook of his color, features, and general stature; who were not children of Abraham spiritually, because they did not partake of his obedient and faithful character. (Jn. 8:37f.) We must love our enemies. . . "that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5:44-45) (If verse 44 read, "Believe, repent, confess Christ, and be baptized; 45. That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven. . . wouldn't that make a fine text for a sermon on becoming a child of God? Now, read it as it is.) When we share such characteristics with God - love our enemies, pray for those who persecute us - we have fellowship with God; and John declares that such life is found only "in Christ" where there is forgiveness.

COMMON RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

FELLOWSHIP WITH ALL SAINTS exists by virtue of our holding a common relationship with God. We are "fellows" - alle, of the same kind, —with all who "have obtained like precious faith with us" through, Christ. (2 Pet. 1: 1-4) This implies no conscious or organic tie respecting one-another. We may one day meet a total stranger, with whom we have had no dealings, and find that we are alike "partakers of the divine nature." We have been "fellow-heirs" "fellow-citizen," 10, these many years, and had no knowledge of one-another. Some have ceased to walk in the light, breaking their fellowship with God, ceasing to be a "partaker" with us, and we were unaware of the loss. Others daily come into this relationship with God, in common with us, and we know it not. Surely it is apparent that this "fellowship" involves no conscious "sharing" with one-another, in the immediate sense, but refers only to a "sharing" with God which we hold in common.

FELLOWSHIP AS A CONSCIOUS EFFORT

Then there is a FELLOWSHIP WITH CERTAIN SAINTS which necessitates a conscious effort on our part - a "sharing" of efforts, materials, or desires. Titus was Paul's "partner" and fellowhelper in his work with the Corinthians. (2 Cor. 8:23) The church at Philippi "communicated" with Paul, as concerning giving and receiving. (Phi. 4:15) The "right hands of fellowship" given Paul and Barnabas (Gal. 2:9) were indicative of a "sharing" or likeness of understanding, faith and desires. The taught has fellowship with the teacher (Gal. 00, and the "haves" distribute to the "have-nots" (Rom. 12:13), for the Hebrew writer said, "To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." (Heb. 13:16) This fellowship seems to have no congregational boundaries, but is expressed freely among all those who share understanding and faith, and whose love for God and one-another draw them together. To encourage, and show the fruit of this sort of fellowship, John urged Gaius and others to receive and support those who traveled about teaching the truth. (3 Jn. 5-8)

Such fellowship is not, however, mere "union" or "association." To be in keeping with God's will, it must be "in Christ's name" (as explained in Mark 9:37-41). It is a bond, and a sharing among saints to the end that the cause of Christ might prosper; "because ye belong to 'Christ," (v.s. 41). John wrote, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." (2 Jn. 10-11) "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship (metoche, sharing) have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion (koinonia) hath light with darkness?" (2 Cor. 6:14) "Christian fellowship" (and the concept is valid, even if the terminology is not) is certainly more than the social association of church members. It is a sharing of faith, hope and obligations in the service of God through Christ. It is a communion of each saint with God in Christ (I Cor. 10: 14-22), which each must will and execute individually, so that we share a common relationship -and which then motivates a sharing of prayers, material, and effort. There is no way to have "Christian fellowship" with one who has no such relationship with God in Christ, nor desires such a relationship.

LOCAL CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

When brethren discuss "fellowship" or "dis-fellowship" they seem determined to hedge the subject with congregational (local church) boundaries. Extreme cases extend from the idea that if one church "disfellowships" a person, all churches are bound under penalty of God to honor this action, (making the weakest church, with poorest judgment, a legislator for all churches); to the idea that all saints other than those of the church "taking action" are free, without divine censure, to

continue "fellowshipping" the excluded person. The Lord authorizes saints to function as one, and provides instruction (by command, example and inference) for the local church. Further, I believe this is the only organized entity ("having organization" for those of that faith) God does recognize for the carrying out of work He has given saints to do collectively. It follows that saints who are a part or members of such a "team" have certain "team obligations" and are "fellows" in the local church. But the "fellowship" of the scriptures is given a much broader realm than that.

Just for the exercise, try this. On the left side of a long sheet of paper summarize every passage in the N. T. using the words translated from *koinonia*, and its various forms. (See closing part of paragraph one, this article.) Now, draw four perpendicular columns beside these summaries, and head the columns as follows: (1) Relation with God, without respect to others; (2) Relation with God, held in common with others, therefore "fellows" in our relation with God; (3) Relation with other saints (sharing) which is not limited to local church activity; and (4) "Fellows" in local church activities. Study each passage, and "check" the column in which you think it belongs. You may have some difficulties, and may put some passages in two columns, but you will gain a new perspective of our subject. "Fellowship" is not synonymous with "local church" or party.

With the above fresh on your mind, it is a good time to re-study the passages on "withdrawing" fellowship. "Let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican" (Matt. 18:17) calls upon us to recognize the person for what he has become. He has ceased to "share" characteristics with God - to have God-like desire for purity, Godlike unselfish love, God-like justice, God-like forgiveness hence, he has ceased to be in fellowship with God. All efforts to prompt, awaken, and restore these God-like characteristics have failed; so Jesus said for the disciples to recognize his real condition; viz., "as the Gentile (heathen, K.J.) and publican" —"as outside of the commonwealth of Israel" (Lenski) —or, as no longer a "fellow" among the saints.

The incestuous man (I Cor. 5:1-13) was to be "delivered unto Satan;" i. e., treated as the sort of person his conduct indicated - a child of the devil. The purpose of this was to make him keenly aware of the depths to which his fleshly appetite had brought him, so that he might put to death (mortify) his ungodly desires (See Col. 3:5-6) and save his soul. Association with fornicators in the casual contact of life with not forbidden ("for then must ye needs go out of the world") for there was no pretense of "sharing" spiritual relations with such. But to allow a "brother" who was a fornicator to go uncensured, was to act as though the incompatible (light and darkness) were partners. I believe I Cor. 5 urges discipline within a local church; but the sins which made the man unacceptable as a partner in one church, would deny him "Christian' fellowship anywhere.

Rom. 16:17-19 strengthens the validity of this principle. "Mark" (Gr., skopeo) is not "brand" (Gr., stigma; compare "stigmatize"). Paul said "watch out for" or "take note of" those who make it their business to produce divisions, and to "avoid" them. "I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple (without guile, free from admixture) concerning evil." The thought is not so much "get rid of" — but "do not enter into" partnership with such. How can there be true spiritual fellowship between those who serve Christ, and those who serve their own belly? (v.s. 18)

LIMITS

The standard for determining the "withdrawal" in 2 Thess. 3:6f. is the doctrine (teaching) which Paul had delivered to the Thessalonians and others. ("Tradition" does not classify content, but indicates means of transmission - things passed from teacher to pupil.) Hence, although there is clearly a local context, the action of the saints at Thessalonica was to be taken 'In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ' and in keeping with a rule that applies to all saints. True "Christian" fellowship has neither congregational nor sectarian "churchhood" (often erroneously called "brotherhood") limit, but as broad as the true brotherhood of Christ. It finds functional application in the local church, God's plan for the collective action of saints; but exists by virtue of the universal rule of Christ, not by local or party standards.

The action of a local church or "churchhood" of churches can neither make nor break true "Christian" fellowship. Consider again I Cor. 5: If. Did the continuation of association on the part of the saints at Corinth, make the incestuous man one with more in fellowship with God, or with faithful saints elsewhere? Obviously it did not. Or, to reverse the situation, when Diotrephes influenced the brethren of a local church to "cast out of the church" those who were striving to do what the Apostle John commanded, did this lessen the true fellowship these "cast out" ones had with God, or with other faithful saints? Not at all. (See 3 Jn. 5f) The act was a presumptuous one, and served only to sever the partnership Diotrephes and his kind once had with God and the saints.

DIFFERENCES AND ATTITUDES

Since "fellowship" "partnership," "sharing" with God is, by the very nature of the two "partners," on an unequal basis; and man's part is, at the very best, his sincere endeavor to be God-like; some have banished the whole subject of fellowship to a limbo of relativity. By making man's faith and effort purely subjective (its standards self-determined, its reward self-satisfaction) God is practically forced out of the company, and all who contend for "the faith" as the basis for fellowship are

called "legalists" and "narrow-minded church-splitters" who "have no love for the brethren." But saving faith is objective - an acceptance of external authority, —a looking to the revealed will of God for the "light" in which we must walk. While it is true that men may honestly differ in their understanding of God's will, they must "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel. (Phil. 1:27) "if there be therefore any. . . fellowship of the spirit — it must be found in this striving, objectively, for God's truth. (Read 1:27 through 2:2, and forget about that man-placed capital "S" on the second "spirit.") subjective differences among men can be smothered in objective unity, as we become "like-minded one toward another

according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God." (Rom. 15:5-7)

There can be no genuine fellowship between one man who earnestly desires to know God's will and do it, and another who travels the path of human wisdom and majority rule. In reality, the bond of "Christian" fellowship among saints IS NOT so much the uniformity of practice, or even of doctrinal conclusions per se, (these being the fruits) but is rather the spirit and attitude that produces such fruits. For example, two men who do the same thing religiously —one because he sincerely believes God wants it that way, and the other because he likes it that way and has no intention of changing, regardless of God's word —may be less in fellowship than two men whose practice is different, but who are both sincerely searching for truth, and are willing to conform to all truth they find. The first two will drift further apart; the second two will be drawn together in the paths of God. The universal laboratory test to determine the spirit of man, is his reaction to examination of his practices in the light of the revelations of God's Spirit.

This does not argue that differences in practice and/or conclusions are of no consequence. Instead, it establishes the climate for unity of conclusions and practice - our sincere endeavor to believe and practice the unified will of God. In Jesus Christ imperfect man is given the means of peace with God, with his fellowman, and with himself. (Eph. 2:11-22; 2 Cor. 5:19) He gives us a unified message (Eph. 4:5, 11-16), and teaches that we can find oneness in that message. (Jn. 17:17, 20-21) Jesus says, "If any man will do (willeth to do, A.S.) his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." (Jn. 7:17) When men fail to find and maintain unity and proper fellowship with God and with one another it is not the fault of God. The fault lays with those men who refuse to use the means of fellowship which God has given.

There is no legitimate escape from the differences that must exist between imperfect men, as they search for truth, and find themselves at different levels of understanding, As already discussed, fellowship is not so much negated by that dif-

ference as by the differing attitudes that accompany it. Nor have we helped the matter by seeking to whittle God's standard down to size. Many of those who advocate "unity in diversity" have simply established (?) lines of so-called "fellowship" that are broad enough to enclose those whom they wish to receive, or have convinced some that they should participate in error "for the sake of peace." This does not serve God's purposes. My honest self is all I have to give to God, and I must act consistent with my understanding, my sincere conviction, in order to be true to myself and to God. (Acts 23:1, 24:16)

PARTY FELLOWSHIP

In the course of studying God's word and following honest convictions it is conceivable, even probable, that men will group themselves according to their convictions. We will "jointly participate" "hare" with those whom we regard as followers of God, and refuse to be 'partners' in the practice of things we regard as contrary to God's will. If we are concerned for men's souls, we will endeavor to teach others what we believe to be the truth —and if we are not concerned, we lack that much having fellowship with God. We should have strong convictions — "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" —but we should never forget that we must give account of ourselves to God. We must have our faith "before God." (Rom. 14:5, 12, 22) We must never regard our conclusions as the standard for others (Rom. 14:4) but must point them to God's word as the standard to which we are alike subject. Our conclusions must remain subject to revision, should we be shown or discover that God's word teaches the need for this.

Here is the core of men's problems regarding fellowship. Puffed with pride, we have made "our plea" a cheap and shoddy substitute for the scriptural "oneness" of humbled, submissive man's spirit, attuned to the Spirit of God; and "our church" the rule by which others are judged. This was the error of the Corinthians, who maintained a fellowship which God rejected; and of Diotrephes and his followers, who rejected a fellowship which God retained. It is the error Paul warned against, saying, "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves; but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." (2 Cor. 10:12f) How else can one explain the preoccupation of some with the "mainstream of the restoration movement" or "the pulse of the brethren." Whose brethren? Why "our" brethren, of course —begging the whole question of God-approved fellowship. And so we witness the ridiculous extremes of property deeded to those whose faith and practice conform to that of the majority of the Churches of Christ in Texas, or brethren charged with "fellowshipping error" because they engage in Bible study of differences with institutional brethren.

There is no surer sign of sectarianism than "fellowship" on the basis of "our" churches, or "the mainstream of the movement" rather than on the manifestation of one's love for God and His truth. When "mainstream" churches begin to function collectively this is the gist of denominationalism. It narrows New Testament brotherhood to "party fellowship" and soon its followers begin to think that TRUTH flows in the channel cut by this "mainstream." The fact is, TRUTH cuts its own channel, and IS the mainstream which faithful saints follow.

As men come into fellowship with God, the same "rule" which taught them to believe, repent and be baptized for the remission of sins, will teach them to assemble with those of like faith, and worship God. That same "rule" will teach them the work God expects of them, and such means of organization and performance as He has seen fit to order. It will direct necessary phases of their daily life, both collectively and individually, so that they may "glorify God" in all things. And, to the extent they maintain the same selfless, prayerful, Bible-searching spirit that brought them to Christ, they will be unified in Christ. They will have "fellowship" with like saints everywhere, and will find no "communion" with the contrary spirit anywhere. They will exclude from their local "partnership" all who cease to walk by the same rule; ever mindful the whole truth, but equally aware that God expects complete dedication of that understanding and ability of which they are capable. God "dwells" with these kind of people, while they give themselves as living sacrifices; and then, they dwell with God eternally in Heaven. "For... He is not ashamed to call them brethren."

There may be many things in which people can commonly share while at the same time they may be unable to jointly participate in other things."

Fellowship Defined and Applied

FRANKLIN T. PUCKETT

Fellowship is often a misunderstood and misused term. Meanings may be attributed to it which it does not have, or it may be denied meanings it legitimately possesses. It is sometimes used to include extensions and applications which are not inherent in it or to limit and exclude uses which it naturally has. Such results in confusion and frequent strife. A study of fellowship with its connotations and concomitant ideas is in order and this paper is to be commended for conducting such a study in this special issue. If the following article will in any sense contribute toward a better understanding of the subject, then I am happy to have fellowship in this discussion.

Definition And Use Of The Term

An understanding of fellowship requires an understanding of the term fellow, the meaning of the New Testament words it is used to translate, and the various significations given to it in the Scriptures. As a noun it may have a variety of meanings depending upon the way it is used. Relating to our study it is defined as "1. comrade, associate; 2. an equal in rank, power, or -character; 3. a member of a group having common characteristics." As an adjective it means "being a companion, mate, or associate." (WEBSTER, Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, p. 307.)

The term fellow is used to translate the Greek words: (1) aner, "a man, male;" (2) hetairos, "a companion, comrade, friend;" and (3) metochos, "sharer, partaker, partner." (VINE, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, Vol. 11, p. 89.) It is frequently combined with other words such as: citizen, soldier, disciple, elder, heir, helper, labourer, member, partner, prisoner, servant, worker, (Ibid., p. 89). A fellowcitizen is one who shares with others the state and benefits of being a citizen. A fellowlabourer is a companion with and a sharer in labour with others. Being a companion, comrade, or partner of others in sharing with or participating in something which is common to all is the basic idea of being a fellow.

Fellowship is a combination of the term fellow with the suffix -ship, which means "state, condition, or quality; something showing, exhibiting, or embodying a quality or state." (WEBSTER, Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, p. 801.) Fellowship (fellow+ship) is "1: Companionship, company; 2a: community of interest, activity, feeling, or experience be the state of being a fellow or associate; 3: a company of equals or friends; association; 4: intimate personal intercourse; 5: friendliness, comradeship" (Ibid. p. 307). In commenting on the meaning of fellowship,

MacKnight says: "In Scripture, koinonia signifies both the communication of something to others, and the participation of something with others: a joint participation." (MACKNIGHT, *On The Epistles, I John 1:3.*) W. E. Vine defines koinonia (fellowship) as follows: "a. Communion, fellowship, sharing in common (I Cor. 1:9). be That which is the outcome of fellowship, a contribution (Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8:4)." (VINE, *An Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Words, Vol. 11, p. 90.*) It "generally denotes the fellowship of persons with persons in one and the same object, always common to all and sometimes whole to each." (EVANS, *Speaker's Commentary, on I Cor. 10: 16.*) Koinonia "is almost always used of fellowship with persons (I Cor. 1:9; Gal. 2:9; Phil. 2: 1) or with things personified (2 Cor. 6:14)." (PLUMMER, *Cambridge Greek Testament, on I John 1:3.*)

Fellowship, then, is the state, condition, or quality of persons (or things personified) being companions, partners, or sharers together in some action, benefit, or relation which is common to all the participants. The term is not limited in its use to some single relation, arrangement, or function. It may be used to describe many relations of both individuals and groups of individuals in different arrangements and functions. However, notwithstanding its variety of uses, it always retains the basic meaning of a common sharing together, a joint participation as partners in whatever is being considered.

Realms Of Fellowship

Right conclusions concerning fellowship, non-fellowship, and disfellowship necessarily involve proper definition of the areas and relations to which these terms are being applied. There may be many things in which people can commonly share while at the same time they may be unable to jointly participate in other things. A denial of fellowship in one realm does not always exclude a sharing together in other realms. On the other hand a granting of fellowship in one thing, or in some things, does not require or justify an extension of fellowship in everything. The kind of relation involved, the nature of the function performed, and the consequent results of the action taken must all be considered in order to determine whether fellowship is to be extended or denied.

Citizens of a state may combine their resources and powers in some cause common to all and thus have political fellowship. Friends may share with one another in social and recreational activities and in this way have social fellowship. Members of the same spiritual order may share as partners in some spiritual relation, function, or benefit and have spiritual fellowship. As political and social fellowship are conditioned upon people sharing together in these realms, even so spiritual fellowship is conditioned, upon people sharing together in the spiritual realm.

Political fellowship is determined by civic relations and regulations; social fellowship by social relations and regulations; and spiritual fellowship by spiritual relations and regulations. There is nothing wrong in citizens sharing together in civic affairs as long as that in which they share is legitimate. It is perfectly all right for people, whether Christians or non-Christians, to enjoy social fellowship with one another if the functions and relations in which they share are morally right. But spiritual fellowship can only be had by those who are spiritually related in the same spiritual body and who commonly share in the same spiritual functions and benefits. As a political or social fellowship may be right or wrong depending upon the standard by which it is formed, so a spiritual fellowship may be right or wrong depending upon the standard by which it is formed. All divinely approved fellowship is determined by the word of God. An unscriptural spiritual fellowship is no more pleasing to God than an immoral social fellowship or an unjust political fellowship.

Kinds Of Fellowship

Fellowship may describe the joint-participation or common sharing of individuals, organizations, or societies in social, religious, or business enterprises. Such fellowships may be of general or limited extension. The things in which those participating jointly share may be religious or secular, spiritual or worldly, organized or unorganized, scriptural or unscriptural. All men are granted the right to commonly share or have fellowship in the temporal benefits which God provides (Mt. 5:43-45); saints and faithful ones in the spiritual blessings He bestows (Eph. 3:1-9); individuals and congregations in the service He requires (Tit. 2:11-14; 3:1; 2 Thess. 1: 11, 12; Rom. 15:25-27; 2 Cor. 8:1-15; 11:8). Whether a Christian may participate with others in a particular kind of fellowship is determined by the nature and realm of the action involved, the extent to which such action is authorized or limited by the word of God, and the respect shown toward that authorization or limitation by those with whom the fellowship is to be shared. Differences in kinds and circumstances of fellowship must be carefully discerned and properly judged. Unscriptural, worldly fellowships must be avoided (Eph. 5:11).

The Basis Of Spiritual Fellowship

According to Chandler, in his note on Ephesians 5: 11, the Greeks used *koinonia*. (fellowship) to denote a participation in their religious rites and mysteries, and in the benefits supposed to be procured by them. It also signified a company of men joined together by some common bond, for the purpose of obtaining certain advantages by means of their union. Many of these fellowships were formed for the purpose of celebrating the mysteries, or secret worship of the gods. The particular God in whom the fellowship was formed was considered the head of it and the author of the benefits to be derived in it. (See Macknight on I John 1:3.)

Understanding the way the Greeks commonly used the term should enable us to comprehend more clearly the significance it has when Paul uses it with reference to our fellowship in Christ.

The gospel system of faith and practice is the revealed mystery of God (Col. 1:25-27; 2:1-3; Rom. 16:25, 26). Through the preaching of the gospel, it was Paul's mission to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery (Eph. 3:7-9). Christ is declared to be the head of this fellowship (Eph. 1:23; 4:15, 16), and in Him are stored up all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3). There are no spiritual treasures apart from Him. The benefits are obtained through union with Christ (Col. 1:27), in which relation both Jews and Gentiles become fellowheirs of God, fellow members of the same body, and fellowpartakers of God's promise in Christ by the gospel (Eph. 3:6). This is the fellowship (oikonomia - arranged plan) which Paul brought to light through the preaching of the unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph. 3:9), and into which men are called by the gospel (I Cor. 1:9; 2 Thess. 2:13, 14). The fellowship of Christ, therefore involves a spiritual union with Christ, with spiritual services jointly rendered according to His revealed authority, and spiritual benefits commonly shared in fulfillment of God's promise in Him. If any man preaches any other fellowship in Christ, he preaches a different gospel to that which Paul preached and will receive the consequences of his error (Gal. 1:6-9). Fellowship with the Father, fellowship with Jesus Christ, and fellowship with the Holy Spirit is enjoyed when we share with them that spiritual affinity and related oneness required by the divine will. We have fellowship with one another as brethren when we jointly share in We blessings and responsibilities resulting from our fellowship with God. Fellowship in the gospel is dependent upon fellowship with God, which in turn is dependent upon being united with and walking in Him according to His foreordained plan. Only "if we walk in the light, as he is in the light," do we have fellowship with Him, and "if we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth" (I John 1:6, 7). He who walks in darkness has no fellowship with God, and he who has no fellowship with God can have no spiritual partnership with the children of God.

Christians as children of light: are required to come out of and be separate from unrighteousness, darkness, infidelity, and idolatrous worship (2 Cor. 6:14-18). They are to "walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:8-11). God's children cannot jointly participate in man-made worship or commonly share in idolatrous practices. "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demon, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have communion (koinonous - be fellowsharers) with demons. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons: ye cannot partake (me-

techein-share in) of the table of the Lord, and the table of demons" (I Cor. 10:20, 21). They could choose Christ or demons, but they could not be in fellowship with both at the same time.

All efforts to promote fellowship among differing religious groups by minimizing the need for strict adherence to New Testament teaching will of necessity fail. Such ignores a basic fundamental on which true Biblical fellowship rests. Unless it can be established that all who seek fellowship with one another are first of all in fellowship with God, it can never be established that they have a common spiritual relation enabling them to share in the spiritual values belonging to such a fellowship. Furthermore, it can never be shown that one is in fellowship with God unless it can be shown that he is walking in the light with God (I John 1:7). Only those who walk according to the gospel walk in the light (2 Cor. 4:3, 4). If, therefore, one is not united with Christ and walking orderly in Him according to the gospel, he is not in fellowship with God and has no right to fellowship with the brethren (2 Thess. 3:6, 14, 15).

Walking in the light is not some single act of obedience whereby one becomes a Christian, but is a continuative process of having one's course of conduct governed by the gospel as a Christian. The action of I John 1:6, 7 is durative - not point or perfect. Brother Carl Ketcherside says he will fellowship "every person who has been immersed upon the basis of his sincere faith in Jesus as God's Son and his Lord." (**Defender**, Vol. I, No. 11, January 26, 1969.) By this he would justify the extension of fellowship to all immersed believers whether Methodist, Baptists, Presbyterians, Disciples of Christ, et cetera, et cetera. Even I one should admit that all of these had been Scripturally immersed upon the basis of a sincere faith (a proposition which I will in no wise admit), such would not prove them to be in fellowship with God now. Are all these denominationalists and digressives walking in the light as He is in the light? Or are they walking in the darkness of sin and ignorance? If as they practice their denominationalism they are walking in darkness, then they have no fellowship with God and should not be accorded the spiritual fellowship of God's children. But if it be argued that they are walking in the light, then a continued, persistent course of unscriptural teaching and practice is light in the Lord! Who can believe it?

The Extension And Enjoyment Of Fellowship

Spiritual principles take precedence over physical, civil, and social considerations in determining to whom and how far fellowship is to be extended. If our fellowship with others will in any way violate the spiritual standards by which we are governed, be injurious to the welfare of others, or involve us in any kind of wrongdoing, such fellowship must be refused (Rom. 14:16-21; I Cor. 8:5-13; Eph. 5:11; 2 John 9-11). Fellowship in social affairs may be perfectly all right under

one set of circumstances and wholly wrong under another (I Cor. 10:27-29). The conditions existing at the time and in the place where the fellowship is shared will have a bearing on whether or not a Christian can participate in it. Even associations that would be permissible with men of the world must be denied to brethren who have been disfellowshipped for persistent ungodliness (I cor. 5:9-11). Because of the variability involved in social fellowship, each case must be judged on the basis of its own merit according to the principles and within the limits of the Scriptures given above. Within the scope of these principles social fellowship can be extended to anyone.

Spiritual fellowship can only exist between those who are in fellowship with God and Christ. Such fellowship consists of jointly sharing with one another the spiritual realities revealed in the teaching of Christ (2 John 9-11). Those who go beyond that teaching have neither the Father nor the Son. To the extent that people are not in fellowship with the Father and the Son, faithful ones cannot be in fellowship with them. How far an individual or a congregation may go in error before fellowship with God is broken may sometimes be difficult to determine. Sometimes it is clearly discernible. Sinless perfection is not a requisite of fellowship with God (I John 1:8-10; Rev. 2:1-7), but faithfulness is (I Tim. 1:19, 20). Both individuals and congregations can so far depart from the faith that they will be severed from God and forfeit their right to fellowship with the brethren (Heb. 6:4-6; 1 John 5:16; Rev. 3:14-16). When saints within the fellowship of God's people become involved in error, that fellowship should not be broken over some slight misstep or inconsequential difference (Rom. 14:1-5). Oneness must be maintained as long as possible (Eph. 4:1-3). We should continue to have fellowship with those who are going astray as long as there is hope of restoring them unless such championship puts us in the position of sharing with them in their error. But when hope of restoration is gone and their errors have become sufficiently numerous and obnoxious to sever them from the Lord or to involve others in their sin, then all fellowship with them must cease. Any error that will vitiate the doctrine of Christ or destroy the work of God must be rejected and exposed (Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; 2 Thess.3:6, 11-14).

Conclusion

Right answers to the following questions may help us determine when fellowship is to be extended and when it is to be denied. Will it cause one to violate his own conscience? Will it give endorsement and approval to false teaching and practice? Will it be a stumbling block to others who may be weak? Will it edify men and glorify God? will it result in good or evil? The answer to some of these questions may require a judgment call. Each one must render that judgment in the light of existing circumstances and the illumination of revealed truth. May God give us an

understanding heart to make the right call, a determined will to stand for truth, and a charitable disposition to show compassion.

—38 Riverview Drive

Florence, Alabama 35630

Questions on Fellowship— Focusing The Problems

1. What is fellowship?
 - a. A condition?
 - b. An act?
 - c. An attitude?
 - d. A relationship?
 - e. Or what?
2. How may we know one is in fellowship with God?
 - a. Can we know precisely at what moment a person is out of fellowship with God?
 - b. How can we determine what errors result in severance of fellowship with God?
 - c. Does fellowship with God depend on our soundness on ALL issues and controverted points?
3. Can we distinguish between major and minor issues as regards error and fellowship?
 - a. Does error on any single issue result in severance of fellowship with God?
 - b. Can we distinguish between errors of FAITH and errors of OPINION as regards fellowshiping or not fellowshiping those in error?
4. What do we mean when we say we cannot fellowship a man in error?
 - a. Does it mean to avoid him?
 - b. Does it mean to mark him?
 - c. Does it mean to withdraw recognition of him?
 - d. Does it mean to refuse endorsement of him?
 - e. Does it mean we refuse association with him?
 - f. Does it mean we count him as a "heathen and publican?"
5. In considering a congregation unworthy of fellowship...
 - a. Do we mean God does not recognize the group as a church of Christ?
 - b. Do we mean we are to consider the church unworthy of our participation in its worship and service and that God recognizes neither their worship nor service?
6. Does fellowship ever involve or embrace social association?

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- a. Such as eating meals together?
 - b. Such as visitation in homes?
 7. Is "limited fellowship" acceptable?
 - a. Can we fellowship a person so long as we do not encourage him in his error, or become a party to his error?
 - b. Can we include "liberals" in the corporate association of a local church?
 - c. Can individuals rightfully fraternize with those who are in error?
 8. Can we distinguish or separate between a man and his practice?
 - a. Is it possible to have nothing to do with a person's error, yet maintain fellowship with him?
 - b. Can we associate or fraternize with men who are in error while opposing them in their error?
 9. When is our relationship with others to be considered as fellowship?
 10. What relationship can we have with others which is not fellowship?
 11. What are the precise points of contact involved in Biblical fellowship?
 - a. What social contacts?
 - b. What benevolent contacts?
 - c. What evangelistic contacts?
 - d. What contacts in the realm of "Christian everyday living"?
 - e. What congregational contacts, that is, contacts in congregational interests, activities, and affairs?
 12. Shall we let fellowship take care of itself?
 - a. Will this approach solve the problems confronting individual Christians as regards what is right or wrong as to relations with individuals and congregations which are in error?
 - b. Will this approach enable congregations to embrace a proper policy toward individuals or other congregations in error on various points?

—W. E. W.

"Because 'sharing' in life is based on 'sharing' in spiritual things, the saint is forbidden to 'share' - as a Christian - with those who do not possess the 'common' faith and salvation, whether they be pagan or apostate."

N. T. Fellowship: Christians Sharing Together

EDWARD FUDGE

The English New Testament often uses a variety of words and phrases for a single Greek root in its different forms. This is the case with regard to "fellowship." For this original Greek word-family (*koin-*), the King James Version at times has "common" (*koinos*); "be partaker," "communicate," "distribute," "to have fellowship" (*koinoneo*); "communion," "distribution," "contribution," "fellowship," "communication" (*koinonia*); "partaker," "fellowship," "partner," "companion," (*koinonos*); and "willing to communicate" (*koinonikos*).¹

This article briefly surveys the usages of these words in the New Testament.² It seeks especially to show the root thought running throughout the various members of the word-family, that is, the idea of something held in "common" and thus "shared." All the word forms are viewed here from the standpoint of this most basic and simple definition. I am perfectly happy with the present English rendering of the terms - that is not the point. I am simply attempting to show the basic relationship between the various terms as used in the New Testament. For that reason I will bring out the idea of "something common" or "shared" throughout this article.

Christian "Sharing" Begins As Individuals "Share" With Christ.

Sometimes the New Testament employs our "share" family of words to describe the sharing of Christians with Christ, the Holy Spirit, or God. So far as Christian "fellowship" is concerned, this is where we should start. Because men are "sharer&' in flesh and blood, Christ took part of the same human state (Heb. 2:14). And because of what He accomplished in the flesh, men are able to be made "sharers" in the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). To use an adage from the second century, "it is only because He became like us that we can become like Him."

The preaching of the gospel under the great commission is essentially a relating of Christ's "sharing" with us, and a call for men to "share" with Him in divine sonship. One enters this relationship with Christ on the basis of faith, by obedience to the gospel. Without the gospel, there can be no "sharing" with Christ, and unless men "share" with Him in this manner, they can have no Christian³ "sharing" with one another. Many participants in the so-called "Ecumenical Movement" totally ignore this basic truth, and that oversight alone destines it to failure so far as true Christian unity is concerned.

The idea of Christian fellowship ("sharing") apart from the preaching of the gospel and obedience to it is preposterous. In the light of the New Testament, it is impossible. Christian "sharing" is ONLY possible as men "share" together with Christ—and this "sharing" can be a reality ONLY by means of the gospel. Christian "sharing" is based on the apostolic declaration of things seen and heard (I John 1:3). There is first a "sharing" with God and Christ—on the basis of the gospel - then a "sharing" between those who so "share" with God and Christ.

It is not surprising, then, that Scripture says we are called (through the gospel) into a "sharing" of God's Son (I Cor. 1:9). There is also a "sharing" of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14), and because there is, Christians are to maintain unity of ambition and affection (Phil. 2:1f). Those who "share" with Christ and God "share" a "common" faith (Tit. 1:4) and a "common" salvation (Jude 3) with one another.

Hebrews expresses the same thought by a different word (*metochos*). There saints are "partners" of a heavenly calling (3: 1) through continued steadfastness (3:14). The same epistle also has them "partakers" (the same word) of the Holy Spirit (6:4) and, as sons, of divine discipline (12:8). Christ "shared" with us by His incarnation, life and death. Because of His resurrection and glorification, we can "share" with Him, through obedience to the gospel. If we "share" with Him, we automatically "share" with one another - for we then have a "common" commitment, or trust, or faith, and a "common" salvation. But Christian "sharing" involves more than a spiritual "commonness."

Christians "Share" In Daily Living.

The "shared" faith, "common" to all saints, becomes active (literally, "energetic," the same word found in Heb. 4:12) as it leads to a "sharing" in life through mutual concern (Phe. 6). This "sharing" in life has sometimes been total, as when the first believers had "all things common" (Acts 2:44, 45; 4:32). Most circumstances since then have demanded less, though they have always called for some outward expression of the spiritual "sharing" in a "common" faith and salvation. Any "community" sharing of means calls for some "treasury" arrangement, and involves some manner of "contribution" on the part of those who are willing to "share." By association, then, the same word translated "fellowship" is also used to mean a "contribution." The basic thought is the same as before - only different aspects are emphasized. Paul uses our word in connection with the "sharing" of material things in his epistles to the Romans (12:13; 15:26-27), Corinthians (2 Cor. 8:4; 9:13), Galatians (6:6), Philippians (1:5; 4,15) and to Timothy (I Tim. 6:18).

Because this "sharing" of possessions grows out of a "common" faith and salvation, and because it is grounded in a deeper spiritual "sharing," God regards even it as a sacrifice well-pleasing to Himself (Heb. 13:16) The "sharing" of Acts 2:42

probably fits in here - either as describing the "shared" life of the early part of Acts, or the "shared" possessions involved in the "contribution."

When the "common" faith and salvation become active, Christians "share" in far more than material possessions. The same word-family describes a "sharing" in preaching and teaching God's Word (Rom. 15:27; Gal. 6:6; Phil. 1:5; 4:15). It is used of a "sharing" in the body and blood of Christ through a "common" partaking of the one bread and cup (I Cor. 10: 16). The same words speak of suffering that is "shared," either with Christ (Phil. 3: 10; 1 Pet. 4:13) or with fellow saints (Phil. 4:14; Heb. 10:33). With a "shared" suffering comes also a "shared" comfort or consolation (2 Cor. 1:7). A "common" faith and salvation lead to a "common" life. What is "shared" spiritually in Christ Jesus becomes the basis for active "sharing" in external, physical, daily living as well. The first (spiritual) is the root. The second (physical) is the fruit.

Morals and Teaching May Affect This "Sharing."

Because the "sharing" of saints grows out of their "sharing" with Christ and God, whatever affects their relationship with God also affects their "sharing" with one another. Men "share" what they have in "common." If they do not have anything in "common," or lose what they once had in "common," they do not "share." This is not profound or deep - it is obvious in the very meaning of terms. In this regard, the moral behavior of the saint plays an important part in his "sharing" with other Christians. God is completely holy. Satan is absolutely evil. Each seeks to make men into his own image. Scripture speaks of the moral conflict in terms of "light" and "darkness."

It is evident from observation that light does not "share" anything with darkness (2 Cor. 6:14). When light comes in, darkness goes out. When darkness is present, light is absent. The same is true with reference to the man who claims to "share" with God and Christ as a "partner" in the divine nature. Christians are commanded not to "share" in unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5: 11 see vv. 2:12). They are children of light, and their conduct must reflect that relationship. The saint who says he is "sharing" with God, but is living according to darkness, is lying - it is as simple as that (I John 1:6). If he says that he "shares" with God, then walks in light, his life is in accord with his profession, and he "shares" not only with God but with all others who "share" with God (I John 1:7).⁴

When saints finally part company with another saint who has persisted in sinful living and refused to repent, **5** they are simply acknowledging the fact that they no longer "share" a "common" faith (and thus life) with that person: he has renounced his "share" in that faith by unrepentant sin - and that is an unspoken proof of an evil heart of unbelief."

The New Testament also uses the vocabulary of "sharing" with reference to false religionists. Some of these never had the "common" faith; others once "shared" in it. Some are non-Christians; others are false Christians. Some are pagans; others are antichrists. For example, those who worship demons have nothing in "common" with those who worship God through Christ. Paul thus urged the Corinthian believers not to "share" in the worship of their pagan neighbors (I Cor. 10: 18, 20). John heard a prophetic, heavenly voice call God's people out of sensual and idolatrous Rome, lest they "share" in either her sins or her punishment (Rev. 18:4). Saints have come from darkness to light. Their lives must always show that change. 6

Even those holding the "common" faith and enjoying the "common" salvation (thus "sharing" in spirit and life with other saints) can lose their right to "share" as saints, by leaving the faith and salvation once held "common" with other saints. Faith in Christ (belief, trust, commitment) is an ABSOLUTE ESSENTIAL - without it there is NO spiritual "sharing" with either God or saints. If the Christian leaves this faith he also leaves God. If he leaves God, he leaves his "common" ground with other saints. And if he does this, Scripture terms him an "antichrist," or "reprobate," or "apostate," depending on the particulars of his damning departure from God. "Nothing common - nothing shared" is the self-evident truth involved. How very severe the punishment of the man who once "shared" but left that "common" ground!7

Summary: "Sharing" What Is Held In "Common."

Because saints individually "share" with God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, they together have a "common" faith and salvation. When this "sharing" of faith becomes active, they "share" also in life with one another. This may involve "sharing" in material things, in worship, in preaching and teaching, in suffering and consolation. God's nature demands that those who "share" with Him must become holy. His people, therefore, are not to "share" in deeds of darkness - light and darkness have no "common" ground.

Because "sharing" in life is based on "sharing" in spiritual things, the saint is forbidden to "share" - as a Christian - with those who do not possess the "common" faith and salvation, whether they be pagan or apostate.

In reality, such "sharing" would be impossible —where there is nothing "common" there is nothing to be "shared." On the other hand, where there is a "common" faith and salvation, where there is "common" ground, there may (and should be) a

"sharing" of life among saints —insofar as it is consistent with their individual convictions of conscience.

By the study of God's Word, may we draw nearer to God, closer to one another, and more active in "sharing" as Christians —"partners" in a "common" faith and salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

FOOTNOTES

1 Not included in this summary are places where *koinos* is translated "unclean," "defiled," and "unholy," or the 15 occurrences of a cognate verb (*koinoo*) meaning "to make or call common or unclean."

2 The purpose here is to summarize the teaching of Scripture in my own words. Because of this, the reader is urged to read each Scripture passage as cited.

3 I do not intend to offend anyone by this term, but simply know no other word which fits as well here.

4 Such an individual also enjoys the cleansing blood of Christ, according to the same verse, which proves that "walking in the light" does not mean he has no sin. Otherwise there would be no need for Christ's blood to cleanse. This child of God is still imperfect in knowledge and obedience, and always will be, but he has set his heart and mind to follow God, not Satan. The other extreme would be to say that he can never leave the light, which is also false, as the whole context proves.

5 Such as the immoral man of I Cor. 5-6; the divider/offender of Rom. 16:17f; the factious man of Tit. 3:9f; or the disorderly person of 2 Thess. 3. These people all deny their faith by their lives and, unless they repent, forever lose their "share" with God and Christ and therefore with saints.

6 I Cor. 6:11; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Gal. 5:17-24; Eph. 2:1-6; 4:17-24; Col. 1:12, 13; 3:5-11; 1 Thess. 1:7-10; Tit. 2:12; 3:3-8; 1 Pet. 4:3, 4; 2 Pet. 2:20-22.

7 This can be done - as we have seen from Scripture by false living or by false teaching. To be consistent, however, if one applies the diagnosis of such passages as 2 John 9 to a situation, he should also be willing to administer the "medicine" of v. 10 in that same case. The verses go together.

"If we are not careful we will form or bring into being a situation worse by far the division we seek to rectify."

Proper Attitudes Towards "Temperate" or "Moderate" Liberal Brethren

JIMMY TUTEN, JR.

The caption of this manuscript is somewhat misleading. It implies that one's attitude differs, depending upon degrees of pleasantness and the size of one's mantle of charity. It is the contention of this writer that the right attitude toward brethren in error should be maintained at all times regardless of whether they are moderate or temperate. (Gal. 6:1 ; 2:2-5, 11-17) We must not lose sight of the fact that all "liberal" brethren are what they are because they went out from among us and have divided churches over orphan homes, Herald of Truth, etc. Even a "moderate" liberal brother is still guilty of having split the log that caused the division. all liberals have gone beyond that which is written. (2 Jno. 9-10) "who maketh thee to differ?" (I Cor. 4:7) It is not our practice, but the practice of the liberals that is patterned after the wisdom of men. (Jas. 3:13-17)

I do not believe that improper attitudes have been evidenced by some on both sides of current issues and that there is room for improvement in many areas. however, before making an attempt to evaluate the comment upon the assigned topic some introductory remarks are essential in order that misunderstanding might be avoided.

POINTS OF CLARIFICATION

1. The fact that this article appears in this special must not be construed so as to conclude that this scribe gives approval or endorsement to other positions taken in this issue. I do appreciate the efforts of this journal in allowing both sides of issues to be printed. (I Jno. 4:1; 1 Thess. 5:21) Though we may differ regarding some of the doctrinal stands taken by some who have been asked to contribute to this special issue of the Guardian, we all should strive to handle our differences without being disagreeable.

2. I disapprove of the Guardian's former "peace offensive." This article is not an attempt therefore to reinstate this effort or any that are related to it. I am not a visionary who believes that we should play down our differences and emphasize our agreements. I cannot harmonize this concept with the unity that is taught in the Bible. (I Cor. 1:10) We must be set for a defense of the gospel and this defense requires a form of militancy. (Phil. 1:17; 2 Tim. 4:7) God's word still teaches a way that is right and cannot be wrong.

This is not to say that I am opposed to brethren getting together and discussing differences. What I am saying, is that with one or two exceptions, unity forums,

peace offensives, etc. usually end up accomplishing no good. This writer does not claim to have the answers as to the "what" and the "how" of dissolving differences. But the fruit of present efforts on the part of some have resulted in alienation and hardships. Because of this I feel that the only approach is the individual approach rather than some "organization" type of arrangement. The unity forum type as practiced by Carl Ketcherside and others results in a softening of attitudes toward doctrine (Mission Messenger, "The Fading Fear," November, 1969). In our efforts to acquire unity we must not cease to expose error. The gospel must continue to be taught without fear or favor.

3. This article is not an attempt to present legislation for brethren individually or collectively. Since I do not have all the answers I cannot assume this responsibility. What is presented is merely a demonstration of what I consider to be the proper attitudes one should have toward those in error. Each encounter is somewhat pragmatic, but there will be no worthiness to our accomplishments until brethren as individuals seek right answers to basic questions with which we are faced. Then will we become a voice demonstrating New Testament Christianity, rather than a movement that fails.

4. We must be concerned; we must seek peace and unity. (Heb. 12:14; Eph. 4:3-6) But if we do not exercise caution we might violate our spiritual relationship in the body of Christ. (I Cor. 12:12-13, 18, 27) There is a definite loose, dangerous attitude that is destructive to our common union in Christ and the autonomous nature of collectives of God's people. (I Cor. 10: 16-17; 1 Jno. 1:3-7; Ax. 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-3) Inter-congregational activity appears to be the order of the day. How does this differ from inter-congregational organization? If we are not careful we will form or bring into being a situation worse by far than the division we seek to rectify. This is why this writer stresses individual response within the bounds of the principles of the New Testament.

POSSIBLE DANGERS

There are certain dangers associated with a topic such as that about which I am writing. The words of David Lipscomb (**GOSPEL ADVOCATE**, 1921) illustrates one of these dangers:

"I have noticed it in men, I have noticed it in papers. When One starts out to be over-sweet tempered, to keep out all humanity, he or it becomes one-sided, unfair and the bitterest and most intolerant of men and papers. They do not show goodness in an honest, open, human, brave way. A paper that starts out to have no controversies, to be overly peaceable, is as sure to be filled with unjust insinuations and innuendoes as that tomorrow's sun will rise. You cannot crush the humanity out of men. Do not look for perfection in human beings nor dispense with the work of God while pretending to be Christians."

These words explain the reason for my reservation concerning the Guardian's recent "peace offensive," and other such movements in the interest of so-called unity. I go on record, however, as having enough confidence in its present owner and editor to believe that they will never let this happen to this fine journal. The **GOSPEL GUARDIAN** must never allow itself to be placed in the position of compromise.

The second great danger is that of being misunderstood. In this writing or any other, I do not look upon myself as a self-appointed watchdog. I resent being labeled a "keeper of orthodoxy" by idealists who are so naive as to either overlook or deny liberal elements and loose attitudes toward problems that divide the brotherhood. I do not intend to defend nor uphold any so-called "church of christism," or champion human traditions that may have insidiously made their way into the church. At the same time I will not sit silently by while the church of our Lord is castigated repeatedly as being legalistic, and our preaching narrow-minded. I see certain idealistic minded individuals acting out the very sectarianism they censure. I am weary of their worn out cliches. The real troublers of spiritual Israel (Rom. 2:28-29) are those who are liberal in the sense that they sanction denominational doctrine and practice. Are we to sit on the side-lines and allow the liberals among us to take us in any direction they desire? (2 Jno. 9) God forbid! Past fights for truth and righteousness will have been in vain and future effectiveness destroyed.

In the third place, there is no magic formula for unity to be devised by man. God's plan for unity is in the Book. (I Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:1-6; 2 Tim. 1:13; Tit. 1:9) In our efforts to implement God's arrangement for unity we must be cognizant of the fact that what works in one area will not work in another. Each situation calls for its own peculiar course of action. I am dealing in this writing with attitudes that are right and proper at all times toward all liberals in every situation.

SCRIPTURAL ATTITUDES

Before any discussion of the topic can take place we must define the terms. By "scriptural" I mean that which conforms to the Bible. By "attitude" I mean "posture, or position of a person ... state, condition, or conjuncture, as likely to have a certain result. . ." (The New Webster Dictionary of The English Language, P. 54) If we follow this definition then our attitudes govern our actions and conduct. Whatever attitude we have toward those in error will determine our conduct toward them. We cannot begin to investigate ways and means of seeking unity with erring brethren until our attitudes harmonizes with the Scriptures. This brings it down to a personal level. Other brethren may have the improper attitude, but what about your attitude and mine? This is the issue for the moment. This writing will concern itself with three things: Truth, Tolerance and Team-Work.

PROPER ATTITUDE TOWARDS TRUTH

Error exists because of improper attitudes toward truth. "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, devilish. . . But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy., (Jas. 3:14-17) Pilate said, "What is truth?" God's Word is truth. (Jno. 17:17) Grace and truth comes by Jesus Christ. (Jno. 1: 17) It is the law of the Spirit. (Rom. 8:2) It became such because the Spirit revealed truth through the Apostles. (Jno. 16:12-15; 17:8; Gal. 1: 11- 12) Since it is incorruptible (I Pet. 1:23), our rejection of it will in no way alter it. (2 Cor. 13:8) This body of truth is some times called "the faith" (Jude 3), "word of truth" (Jas. 1:18), "word of God" (I Pet. 1:23), or at other times "gospel" or "doctrine." (I Tim. 1:10-11) We can know truth and walk in it. (2 Jno. 1, 4, 6, 9: 3 Jno. 3) We must not go beyond truth. (2 Jno. 9) It must not be compromised.

Our attitude toward liberal brethren involves the recognition of this God-given standard and the fact that it is the measuring stick or rule for governing the conduct of others. (2 Jno. 5; Gal. 6:1-4) We cannot improve on it. We must come together on God's standard of truth. Proper attitude is that which desires to see brethren in error come together on truth. "Brethren, if any of you do err from truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." (Jas. 5:19-20) There is no reason why all cannot accept these facts and work out our problems with truth as a guide. Have we lost sight of the concept, "if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God?" (I Pet. 4:11). This attitude reveals the direction our efforts should take us. Here is common ground for agreement within a divisive brotherhood. But every citizen of the kingdom of God must support the truth that governs that kingdom. Most are giving only lip service to this concept. Unity will not come by rhetoric, by fleeing from controversial issues, nor simply wishing for unity. It will come only when we agree to come to terms with great issues that divide us and face them honestly in the light of God's Word. I cannot harmonize some of the present expressions of fellowship among faithful and erring brethren with my Bible.

Each brother in Christ should examine his position in the light of truth and if there is need for reform or structural redesign within the limits of truth, one should adapt oneself to the need. Truth appears to be "forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne." This is why it is easier to tolerate error than to stand against the tide that seems to overwhelm us. There can never be any unity in a Biblical sense until truth becomes the guide line. Unity at the expense of truth is not unity. (2 Cor. 6:15-16) Unity in error is worse than division itself. We must oppose

amalgamation, loose federation, tolerance and the idea of unity in diversity. (I Cor. 1:10) There can be no unity without regard for Bible doctrine and practice. May God hasten the day when a resurgent cry for "back to the Bible" brings us together on God's platform for unity. We must see ourselves united on the basis for truth rather than the sophisticated idealism of men. When snarling, grievous wolves threaten us, we must stand on the truth of God's Word. Our faith may be shipwrecked or even destroyed, but not the truth of God. (I Tim. 1: 18-20) Are you really concerned about the division that exists in the brotherhood? Then begin to do something about that division by looking into the mirror of truth. (Jas. 1:25)

PROPER ATTITUDE TOWARD TOLERANCE

While this sub-heading may appear somewhat contradictory, the fact still remains that there is an area within the bounds of the principles of truth where tolerance can be maintained and truth not sacrificed. I speak with reference to the matter of expediency. Before discussing those scriptures that govern expedients, let us define the term. The New Webster Dictionary defines an expedient as "tending to promote the object proposed; proper under the circumstances ... means which may be employed to accomplish an end." (P. 309) When God has commanded a thing, some means must be brought into existence to carry it out. The expedient is not a law of God, but is simply an expression denoting that the thing commanded of God is carried out. It is therefore in the realm of human judgement. But before a thing can be expedient, it must first be lawful and authorized by God, either by specific or generic authority. Baptism, for example, is authorized by a positive statement from God. (Mk. 16:16) As long as there is an individual who is a penitent believer, (Ax. 2:37-38) seeking to be immersed (Col. 2:12), any means may be used to carry this out. We may use a stream, a pool, a baptistery or river. The who and the what of baptism is specified, but we are at liberty to carry this out according to our own judgement. It is at this point that many evidence an improper attitude. Observe the following scriptures:

"All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. (I Cor. 6:12)

"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not." (I Cor. 10:23)

"Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." (I Cor. 8:13).

Here then is where tolerance enters the picture. If one is unwilling to say that a brother or sister will be lost for not participating in a certain program or act, then we admit that that practice is an optional matter (an expedient). This should never become the basis for strife or division. We should be willing to do what God has

authorized in a way which all can agree upon and still remain united. But alas, those who introduced into the work and worship of the church instrumental music, missionary societies, sponsoring church arrangements and institutionalism argue for and defend them as expediencies. At the same time they become matters of fellowship, especially when pressed to the point of division.

If we seek means of communications and unity with brethren then we must be tolerant with those with whom we differ regarding matters of human wisdom (expediency) But remember, the expedient must be lawful, either by generic or specific authority. If we advocate that a thing is simply a matter of "how," then we dare not press it to the point of division. Intolerance in this area is a grave sin of which not a few are guilty.

PROPER ATTITUDE TOWARD TEAM-WORK

In view of the considerations already adduced, this would appear to be a major thrust. This exertion is desperately needed. It has three facets of special significance:

The first is the willingness to prove all things - "to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account in the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence." (I Peter 3:15, New ASV) This is our most deficient aspect; a forgotten command. We not only have the right to ask each other for authority regarding certain practices, but the obligation. Without realizing it, many have become saturated with the concept that it does not matter what one believes or practices regarding institutionalism, sponsoring church arrangements, etc. If this is true, then Peter's words are meaningless.

There are right ways and wrong ways of proving a thing to be scriptural. We cannot prove that a thing is right by assumption. We must know that it is right according to the scriptures. Supposition likewise has no place in this category. This was the sin of some of the people on Pentecost. (Ax. 2:15; Jno. 21:20-23) Even though certain Jews could not prove a single charge against Paul they accused him of being a mover of sedition and a pestilent fellow. (Ax. 24:5, 15) if we are to have team-work in working out our differences (each individual working concurrently) we must not resort to unfounded accusations. and what about misrepresentations? This certainly has no place in the Christian's investigation. Yet because human nature is as it is, misrepresentations continue.

Webster says that the word "prove" means to "try or ascertain by an experiment; to test; to make trial of; to establish the truth or reality of by reasoning, induction, or evidence. . ." Jesus set the stage for such action when he raised the question: "the baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or men?" (Matt. 21:25) We test (Lk. 14:19), examine (I Cor. 11: 20), or try things (I Jno. 4:1) by turning to the only source of proof that is unerring and infallible, the Word of God.

(Jude 3; 2 Tim. 3:16-17) We must prove all things. It is not enough to prove some things. All religious parties do some things that are scriptural. If we fall short of proving all things that we do religiously, we are short of the divine command.

The second is willingness to hear all things with unprejudiced minds — "he that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him." (Prov. 18:13) Prejudice is a terrible thing. It is intellectual stigmatism that is a perfect combination of conceit and ignorance. "He who will not reason is a bigot; he who cannot is a fool, and he who dares not is a slave." (Drummand) This open minded attitude not only applies to our practices, but to individuals as well. Jesus said, "doeth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" (Jno. 7:51) Just how far prejudice has effected our attitudes toward each other and toward the Word of God regarding present controversies is something that only God knows. We see evidence of it on every hand.

The third and final characteristic is love for the brethren — "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor." (Rom. 13:10) "Let love be without dissimulation. . . Be kindly affectioned one to another in brotherly love; in honour preferring one another." (Rom. 12:9-10) By this use of love this writer does not refer to the nicety, the sweetness, or agreeableness that smiles upon error and overlooks sin in the lives of others. I am not talking about a mantle of charity that leads to compromise. The kind of love for brethren that the Bible requires is that which will reprove those in error when reproof needs to be done. (Eph. 4:15; 2 Tim. 4:2) It demands obedience to all of God's commandments. (I Jno. 5:2-3) I say this to off-set the idea that is prevalent, i. e., that "it is a lack of love that divides us and not doctrinal issues." Those who hold to this philosophy do not practice the love they preach because they really do not understand the term used in the Bible.

Why is love for the brethren important? Let's face it!! There is indeed a spirit of divisiveness, intolerance and obsession with digression that eliminates the spirit of grace. The number of those who have this spirit is few, but great damage is done. Love demands that we accept all as being sincere in practices, though we believe them to be sincerely wrong. It demands that we judge no motives and deal with the issues at hand, rather than with personalities. Generally speaking we have yet to learn how to disagree without being disagreeable. (Ax. 15:37-40; Col. 4:10)

CONCLUSION

New Testament Christianity will not allow us to cut off those with whom we disagree by refusing to deal with differences. We cannot compromise our convictions by seeking unity so badly that we overlook differences and concentrate on points of agreement. We should not boycott each other, but try at all times to maintain

communications. This can be done without violation of our convictions that are Bible centered. There are those who are guilty of going beyond that which is written (2 Jno. 9), and yet there is still hope for some of them, as long as they remains teachable. Others have gone so far into apostasy that they must be marked and delivered over to Satan. (Rom. 16:17-18) No matter how far we feel one is steeped in digression, if that person is willing to study with the proper attitude and spirit, we should not refuse to study.

This scribe will talk to anyone at any time about differences that divide us. I cannot and will not bid the teacher of error God-speed. (2 Jno. 10-11) In trying to have the right attitude toward those in error let us not go too far. Some have already withdrawn from the firing line and gone into the plains of compromise. If this is the way to win the battle for truth and righteousness, then I have been misreading my New Testament. We definitely need to revamp our attitudes toward those in error (generally speaking). But our time can be well spent if we concentrate on preaching truth and letting fellowship take care of itself. Most liberals (or institutional minded brethren. Both terms am used accommodatively) could care less about harmony and affinity with so-called Antis. If all had the right attitude then we would all come back to the way that is right and cannot be wrong.

"And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against any one; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity." (Col. 3:12-14)"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father." (Col. 3:17)

James W. Adams observed in *The GOSPEL GUARDIAN* March 20. 1953, "As far as I am personally concerned, the question of fellowship with those who believe in and support institutional orphan homes should be the last to be raised. It is assumed that my brethren who differ from me on this point are completely sincere and that if and when they are convinced that they are violating scriptural principles, they will cease to so do. It seems to me more reasonable and more consonant with the spirit of Christ for us to continue to probe for an answer to our problem in the form of an unquestionable and universally acceptable basis upon which we can function in discharging our benevolent responsibilities. It is the conviction of this writer that the longer we delay in reaching such a solution and the more we complicate the situation by establishing new institutions and by harsh and bitter personal attacks on those of opposing views, the greater will be the danger to the

peace and unity of God's people. May God help us to work and pray for common ground and unbroken fellowship. "

Alexander Campbell: In 1825 Alexander Campbell was challenged, by a reader of the Christian Baptist, on his use of the term "full communion" as he applied the term to fellowship with Baptists. This was in a time when lines were not finally drawn between the "restoration churches" and the old line Baptists. At this point of time in the Restoration Movement, attitudes toward relationship and fellowship with Baptist bodies had not become crystallized. In defense of a limited fellowship with those in error, Campbell observed; ". . . I will unite with any Baptist society in the United States, in any act of social worship; such as prayer, praise, or breaking bread in commemoration of the Lord's death, if they confess the one Lord, the one faith, the one hope, and the one baptism: ... But that congregations may be found, under the banners of this profession, with whom I would not unite in one single act of social worship, as well as individuals, I will cheerfully declare. And with not one would I unite in prayer, or praise, or breaking bread, if that act is to be interpreted into a full, perfect, and entire approbation of all their views, doctrine and practice, as a society of individuals." The Christian Baptist, Vol. 111 1825, pages 201-203, **GOSPEL ADVOCATE** Reprint Edition, 1955.

SAND CREEK DECLARATION: James DeForest Murch sets forth the importance of this document, in the book "Christians Only." "The brethren in Shelby County, Illinois, had been gathering at Sand Creek for a yearly meeting since 1873. On this occasion it is said that six thousand persons were present. Daniel Sommer, editor of the Octographic Review, had been invited to address the assembly; and he harangued them for an hour and forty minutes on the state of the brotherhood charging the 'innovators' with being responsible for all the existing division, bitterness and strife. In the midst of the address P. D. Warren, one of the elders of the Sand Creek congregation arose and read a document which claimed to represent the views of Sand Creek, Liberty, Ash Grove, Union and Mode churches." This event and this "manifesto" were important factors in the cleavage among churches of the Restoration Movement. Read about it in Murch's "Christians Only," or in "Daniel Sommer, 1850-1940" compiled by Wm. E. Wallace, or in Brumback's History of The Church (now out of print). The Sand Creek meeting and declaration are important factors in the laying of foundations for 20th century church history.

August 1959: In an editorial Yater Tant printed the remarks of Batsell Barrett Baxter relative to listing preachers in Volume I of Preachers of Today. Baxter observed: "We do not wish - in this publication, or elsewhere - to draw a line, excluding our brethren with whom we do not agree on certain brotherhood issues."

Tant wrote, "We share brother Baxter's reluctance to 'draw a line' against brethren, . . ." It is interesting to note the number of men who are opposed to institutionalism and sponsoring churches who contributed their biographical sketches to the book. - **GOSPEL GUARDIAN**, August 27, 1959.

"It seems odd to me that brethren can disagree with some denominationalist, and yet continue to be friendly and treat him civilly; yet, when brethren disagree among themselves, feelings become so sharp and tempers flare so high, that a calm and candid discussion of their differences becomes impossible."

Some New Testament Guide Lines For Fellowship

LLOYD MOYER

My responsibility, in fulfilling the assignment given me for this Special Issue of *The GOSPEL GUARDIAN* is to set forth those principles of truth stated in the New Testament which relate to and govern or guide us in fellowship. Since these New Testament truths are the same as they have ever been, I shall not offer anything new, but will simply re-state what has been taught by faithful gospel preachers and teachers in times past.

The subject of fellowship is receiving considerable attention these days. Many movements have been set in motion to unite different groups into one fellowship. I do not write this paper because of any ecumenical movement, but because of the attention given the subject in the scriptures. The New Testament guide lines for fellowship do not rise or fall or fluctuate with the fervor and zeal of the religious world. They remain constant. They are the same today as they were in the apostolic days. It is not my purpose to determine whom you should or should not fellowship, but the design of this article is to suggest some New Testament guide lines by which brethren may be able to determine their own course. The very fact that the people of God are divided into fighting and fussing factions is evidence that some have failed to follow the principles governing unity and fellowship. The Church is being splintered and fragmented by God's own people. These folk love the Cause of Christ, and honestly feel that they are doing exactly as God's Word dictates. This, however, cannot be true since each group refuses to fellowship others. If all taught the truth and practiced the truth, then all would be teaching and practicing the same things which pertain to salvation.

I. BASIC MEANING OF FELLOWSHIP

The word fellowship basically means sharing, association, communion, community, intercourse, the share which one has in anything, participation, benefaction jointly contributed, a collection, contribution. These definitions come from Thayer, page 352, also W. E. Vine, "Dictionary of New Testament Words."

(I John 1:3. *"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."*) Verse 7. *"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."*) Thayer comments on these verses, page 352 *which fellowship consists in the fact that Christians are partakers in common of the same mind as God and Christ, and of the blessings rising therefrom. "*

From this we conclude that our fellowship with each other is simply the result of all being in fellowship with God and Christ by virtue of our keeping or obeying the word of God. Hence, our first and all-important guide line for fellowship is strict and complete obedience to the word of God. As desirable as fellowship with one another is, it cannot exist where any have failed to walk according to God's word. Since those who violate the commands of God have transgressed the law of God, "*Sin is transgression of the law,*" (1 John 3:4); they have, by their acts, broken their fellowship with God and Christ and have simultaneously broken fellowship with those who remain faithful and insist on authority from God's Word for all things practiced.

If the faithful extend fellowship to those who are transgressing God's law, they become a "*partaker of their evil deeds*" (2 John 9-11). Paul says, ". . . and *have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove Mem.*" (Eph. 5: 11).

Those who violate God's word are unrighteous, while those who faithfully follow the teaching of God are right: but there can be no fellowship between righteousness and unrighteousness (2 Cor. 6:14). Hence, the faithful have no choice in the matter, they cannot fellowship those in sin and remain in fellowship with God and Christ.

II. CIRCUMSTANCES

No set of circumstances can justify a violation of God's law. The doctrine of "Situation Ethics," as taught by the Modernist, is as false as Satan. However, the scriptures certainly teach that circumstances determine, in many cases, what is right or wrong. Let us note some examples.

1. The circumstances determined what Jesus taught His disciples. (John 16:12) "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." Also, (Mark 4:33) ". . . and with many such parables spake he the Word unto them, as they were able to hear it." To the Corinthians Paul said, "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able." (1 Cor. 3:2) (Emp. mine. L. M.)

2. Paul refused to submit to demands by false brethren to have Titus circumcised. (Gal. 2: 2-5). Yet under another set of circumstances, he did circumcise Timothy. (Acts 16:1-3) Thus we see that a thing wrong under one set of circumstances was all right under a different set of circumstances. I rather suspect that had some of our present day brethren been there, they would have accused Paul of compromising the truth of the gospel because of the Jews.

3. (Romans 14:1-6) Some esteemed one day above another, while others regarded not the day. Paul simply said let every man be fully *persuaded (assured)* in his own mind"(verse 5); yet, in Gal. 4:10-11 he said, "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain "4. Paul condemns eating of meat. (I Cor. 8:10-12). Also, ". . . and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils" (I Cor. 10:20); yet, in I Cor. 8:8 he says it does not make one better or worse. The circumstances, and one's own knowledge (I Cor. 8:7), will determine what should be done in many such cases. "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him *which* eateth not *judge him* that eateth: for God hath received him." (Rom. 14:3) Here is a clear cut case of brethren disagreeing on a matter and yet no indication of a disruption of fellowship. Each was to be "fully persuaded in his own mind," (Rom. 14:5), and "Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. (verse 22).

III. CAN THERE BE FELLOWSHIP WHERE BRETHREN DISAGREE?

It seems obvious, from a study of the passages listed above, that there are areas where complete agreement is not necessary to fellowship. Of course, there must be agreement, harmony, oneness of mind, a speaking of the same thing (John 17:20-21; 1 Cor. 1:10) on all matters which pertain to becoming a Christian, worship, organization, work, identity and purity of the church; so the areas of disagreement would have to be things which do not affect any of these.

There are personal beliefs which; if not forced upon others, and no discord caused in the church, do not warrant disfellowship. Let us illustrate.

1. A Christian is convinced his allegiance to civil government obligates him to join the Armed Forces and fight in time of war. Another Christian is convinced he cannot do this. They disagree. What one does about the matter does not affect the other. It has been a controversial matter through the years, yet, brethren have continued to fellowship each other.
2. A woman may feel she must wear a covering to worship. By all means, let her do so. As long as she has her faith to herself, and does not cause discord or try to force her conviction on the church, there is no reason for a rupture of fellowship.
3. One may feel compelled to kneel when praying. Let him do so. As long as one does not make his feelings a matter of law and try to force the whole church to accept them as God's teaching, fellowship need not be broken.

There are many things on which brethren disagree and yet they have not drawn lines of fellowship over them. To name a few: the qualifications of elders; Sunday night communion, use of tobacco, drinking coffee, the marriage question.

IV. WHY DISFELLOWSHIP OVER SOME ERROR AND NOT OVER SOME OTHER?

Some things affect all brethren or force brethren to engage in those errors; while other things do not affect anyone except those engaging in them. For example:

1. The use of mechanical instruments of music in worship corrupts the worship and causes all to engage in error.
2. The taking of money from the treasury and supporting human institutions causes all (the whole church) to engage in something not authorized in the Scriptures.
3. The pooling of money of many congregations into the treasury of one congregation for the preaching of the gospel and letting that one congregation plan, direct, oversee and control the work, causes all to participate in that which is contrary to scriptural teaching. Since these, and other things, do affect the worship, organization and work, or mission of the church; the faithful have no choice but to disfellowship or withdraw themselves and attend a congregation which does not force them to engage in practices not authorized by the scriptures.

There may be brethren who feel that the above things would be all right; but they do not push their feelings on others, nor do they engage in them, but follow the instructions of the apostle Paul, "*Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God. . .*" (Rom. 14:22). Even though they are in error in their thinking, it is a matter of personal feeling with them, and in no wise causes discord, or the church to engage in error. I see no reason to disfellowship them.

Two things are supreme in our quest for fellowship, namely: (1) a love for, and complete fidelity to, God's Word; never should we break fellowship with God and Christ in order to have fellowship with our brethren, and (2), a fervent love for our brethren and respect for their conviction and conscience. Never run rough-shod over honest and sincere brethren. (Rom. 14:15) However, a word of caution is in order at this point.

The fact that we must not run rough-shod over brethren does not mean that brethren should abdicate to "crankdom." There are some who seem to be cranky and don't like anything done in any way except their way. Certainly, the work of the Lord should not be hindered by self-centered, cranky and contentious brethren, just in order to maintain fellowship with them.

V. MAINTAIN A PROPER ATTITUDE

One may have the truth and yet manifest such an attitude that unity and fellowship with him is next to impossible. Paul exhorted the Galatians, "*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the*

spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. " (Gal. 6: 1) Peter wrote in this manner, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and 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." (I Peter 3:15)

We note two things explicitly taught in these passages. One, that we should be ready always to talk with (some call it communication or dialogue) those whom we consider to be at fault or in error; also, to be prepared to explain to any man who might ask about our hope. Many times the lines of communication are completely closed and no effort is made to re-establish them. Surely, if brethren think others are at fault or in error, they should be trying to restore them. This cannot be done by refusing to talk.

The second thing taught by the above passages is that in any effort to restore or teach, one should manifest meekness and reverence. It seems odd to me that brethren can disagree with some denominationalist,, and yet continue to be friendly and treat him civilly; yet, when brethren disagree among themselves, feelings become so sharp and tempers flare so high, that a calm and candid discussion of their differences becomes impossible. These things ought not so to be. I do not mean that we should leave the impression that we endorse what they are doing that is contrary to scripture, but we do not have to be mean and ugly to them just because. we may be free from the error under discussion. Peter says, ". . . as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour (esteem) all men. Love the brotherhood. . . ." (I Peter 2:16-17). Truly, attitudes play a major role in both obtaining and maintaining fellowship.

These thoughts are presented in love and with fervent prayers that they may, in some small way, contribute to the healing of the breach which now exists in the greatest of all brotherhoods, that is, the People of God.

—41325 Kathlean Street
Fremont, California 94538

THE LUNNENBERG LETTER: Homer Hailey, in "Attitudes and Consequences" points out the importance of the Lunnenberg Letter. "A discussion of the attitude toward the Scriptures gradually formulated among the Disciples and the crystallization of certain points of doctrine, would be incomplete without reference to the famous 'Lunnenberg Letter,' and Mr. Campbell's reply to it, which appeared in the September, 1837, issue of The Millennial Harbinger. A sister living in Lunnenberg, Virginia, had taken exception to some things said by Campbell in a former article in which he had made reference to one's finding Christians in all Protestant

parties. It will be noted that Campbell's reply contains some of the most liberal statements ever made by him, although he affirms they set forth views held by him all the time." ("Attitudes and Consequences" is available at \$3.00).

"So many false ideas of fellowship are quickly eliminated when we keep these of true fellowship before our minds."

Constituents of True Fellowship

GORDON WILSON

A scriptural subject may be judged as to its relative importance in a variety of ways: (1) If an accurate understanding of the subject is clearly a condition of becoming a Christian and of going to heaven, its importance is very great; (2) If the subject has become highly controversial, so that it is an issue among the people of God, it takes on great significance; (3) If much space is devoted to the subject in the New Testament, it is obvious that the Holy Spirit considers it of great urgency. On the basis of these criteria, fellowship must be a very important subject indeed.

Judging solely by the amount of consideration given to fellowship in the New Testament, it is evident that we need to study this theme a lot more than most Christians do. The English word fellowship occurs 18 times in the New Testament (using the American Standard Version). Except for one instance in which the word fellowship is from the Greek word *metoche*, it is always translated from various stems of *koinos*, meaning common. Fellowship is twelve times rendered from *koinonia*; one time from *koinonos*; one time from the verb *koinoneo*; and three times from the prefixed verb *sunkoinoneo*.

These Greek terms, with the addition of *koinonikos* are also translated by a number of other English words: communion; communicate; sharer; partaker; contribution; partner; and companion. These are ordinary words which we frequently use in conversation, thus can be readily understood. Their shades of meaning are, however, best seen by noticing what the lexicons have to say.

Thayer gives these uses of *koinonia*: 1. the share which one has in anything, participation; 2. intercourse, fellowship, intimacy; 3. a benefaction jointly contributed, a collection, a contribution.

Arndt and Gingrich enlarge on the word slightly: 1. Association, communion, fellowship, close relationship; 2. Generosity, fellow-feeling, altruism; 3. Sign of fellowship, proof of brotherly unity, even gift, contribution; 4. Participation, sharing in something.

Moulton and Milligan cite these uses of *koinonia* in the papyri: "It is worth noting that the substantive, like the verb. . . is used specially of the closest of all human relationships, e. g., . . . marriage contract of time of Augustus. . . 'belonging in common to' . . . 'partnership.' "

J. C. Lambert, in Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible, one volume edition, writes in part: "3. From the first, however, 'communion' undoubtedly had a larger and deeper sense than those technical ones on which we have been dwelling. It was out of that consciousness of a common participation in certain great spiritual blessings that Christians were impelled to manifest their partnership in these specific ways."

Wick Broomall, in Baker's Dictionary of Theology, also furnishes some interesting information: "Both in classical and Biblical usage these terms express joint participation in a person or project and secondarily association or mutuality of spirit." Again, "Fellowship posits as its prerequisite a likeness of nature that transcends external and temporary differences. True fellowship can exist only among true believers." Broomall gives as the signs of fellowship: (1) Mutual love; (2) Bearing another's burdens; (3) Unity of faith. Later on, these expressions of Christian fellowship are named: (1) A student shares in the material needs of his teacher; (2) A church supports its minister; (3) Ministers recognize the cooperation of others in the work of God's kingdom; (4) Churches unitedly help a needy church; (5) Christians spontaneously share their wealth with other Christians; (6) Christians assemble regularly for worship and edification; (7) They pray for one another.

So much, then, for the meaning of the word fellowship. We now should be ready to draw some conclusions.

First, the word is always used in the New Testament to refer to spiritual activities or attitudes. The one exception to this is in Luke 5:10, where *koinonos* is used of partners in a fishing-boat business. Still there is no real exception, for whenever fellowship is predicated to or of Christians it refers to the spiritual. Absolutely never does fellowship have reference to purely social or recreational activities. When a church, or a group of Christians, gets together for games, coffee, and sandwiches, whatever they may be doing, and whether it is right or wrong for them to do it—it is not fellowship in the New Testament sense of the word.

Second, fellowship always implies mutuality. That is, it is two-sided. I cannot fellowship you if you do not fellowship me. Even in regard to our fellowship with God this is true. He gives us His truth, and we obey it. We render Him service, and He blesses us. So, we have fellowship with Him only when it is His truth that we obey, not when we work our own righteousness. Without this principle of mutuality there is no real fellowship.

Third, fellowship involves equality of moral responsibility. Where there is a partnership, the actions of one partner are binding on the other partner. There is an implied complicity or approval. I am held responsible for what I fellowship, even if I do not personally engage in it. This is why Ephesians 5:11 admonishes us to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness: if I am connected with a

cult practicing secret rites of immorality, I am equally guilty of their practices even if I refuse to engage in them. Or, to look at the other side of the coin, if I enter into fellowship with a local church, I am morally obligated to every phase of the work and worship of that local church —qually obligated with every other member to support and engage in its scriptural programs to the extent of my ability. The very fact of the fellowship necessitates the equal responsibility even if I did not personally advise and consent to that program.

Fourth, fellowship always has a sympathetic object. That is, fellowship is "with" something or somebody; it does not exist as an abstract quality. In this it is Re faith: one cannot believe without believing in something or somebody. So one cannot have fellowship as a solo act. In the New Testament our fellowship is said to be with God; with Christ; with the Holy Spirit; with the apostles; with evangelists; with one another as Christians; with the poor among the saints; with the blood and body of Christ; with or in the gospel; with the sufferings of Christ; with the altar of the new covenant; with the glory that shall be revealed; and with the divine nature. Disapproval is given to fellowship with sin; with evil works; with darkness; and with demons.

Fifth, fellowship is usually judged by its results. The word fellowship is quite generally employed to mean what is done as opposed to merely what exists. Fellowship is not so much a condition as it is an action. In this, also, it is like faith. Faith is a noun, but it is something that is practiced. So the most common word for fellowship is a noun, *koinonia*, but it is something that is practiced. When we put our money together for a common work, that is fellowship. When we send to the needs of an evangelist that is fellowship (both between us and the evangelist, and between us as we collect our funds.) When we provide for the poor, that is fellowship. When we walk in the light, that is fellowship with God —and if more than one of us is doing it, it is also fellowship with one another.

So many false ideas of fellowship are quickly eliminated when we keep these constituents of true fellowship before our minds.

—6316 Pernod

St. Louis, Missouri 63139

September 1955: "Meanwhile, the efforts of many thousands of us continue to be directed toward SAVING, and not DISFELLOWSHIPPING, our brethren whom we believe to be in error. . . As long as a man shows a humble and sincere spirit, and is eager and anxious to learn the will of God, all talk of disfellowship is im-

proper and premature." **GOSPEL GUARDIAN**, September 1, 1955. Yater Tant in editorial.

Martel Pace, **GOSPEL ADVOCATE**, January 22, 1970: "It may be possible to fellowship a man while not fellowshipping his ideas but grave difficulties are involved when we attempt to do so... If we correctly assess the view of Paul it would never be right to fellowship one who persists in error of worship or doctrine that would lead the church into false practice.

"THE ROUGH DRAFT: This is the name given to a document published in The American Christian Review, June 21, 1932 as an attempt on the part of the Review publishers to create an attitude of tolerance among different and controverted segments related to the Restoration Movement. It aroused considerable reaction. Its text is found in "Daniel Sommer 1850-1940." (\$5.95).

Robert Welch, 1961: "A plea to my brethren is, that we do everything righteously possible to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; but that we be careful not to broaden our fraternal fellowship beyond the bounds of God's fellowship; that we seek to establish a disposition of moderation in our discussion of differences with one another; that we make no hasty and later to be regretted actions against our erring brother; that we stand unflinchingly against error and those who promote it; but that all we do be done in love. - 'Love the brotherhood.' " **GOSPEL GUARDIAN**, July 27, 1961. (Note: For an excellent study on fellowship as regards problems and issues in the brotherhood see Robert Welch's series on Fellowship in Volume 13 of the **GOSPEL GUARDIAN**.)

INTERESTING OBSERVATIONS BY THE LAST SURVIVING SON OF DANIEL SOMMER, AN OCTOGENARIAN.

Concerning Unity Meetings

ALLEN R. SOMMER

The first I recollect was at Butler University, Indianapolis, one night. Daniel Sommer had been notified by Dean Kersliner and invited me to accompany him. There must have been eight or ten other men in that room. Elmer L. Jorgenson was there. All I recall of the program was that we stood, holding hands, in a circle, and each offered a prayer. Jorgenson brought us home in his auto.

The next appointment was the Central Y. M. C. A., Indianapolis. I was not present, but one who was told me that Edwin Errett, editor of *The Christian Standard*, said: "There sits Daniel Sommer who has convinced us of the evil of the Missionary Society; and we may live to acknowledge he is right in regard to instrumental music in the worship." Errett died a couple of years later.

The next one I recall was in the Barton Hotel, Indianapolis. George Klingman delivered quite a speech attempting to unify the action of a tuning fork, a pitch pipe and an organ in worship. Edward Ames, a prominent figure in the "far left" Christian Century cult, spoke to Klingman; pointing to Daniel Sommer and to me; he said: "We know where these Sommers stand, but we can't figure you out." I was sitting next to Ames and he turned to me and asked: "What do you think of it?" I said: "Your car brings you to the meeting house door, but you don't take it inside with you. So the pitch pipe and tuning fork bring us to the hymns and stops there." Ames reached into his pocket, and fished out some money and said: "Send your Review paper to me."

The next I remember was arranged by Witty and Murch, to be held at Englewood Christian Church, Indianapolis. It was three or four days and largely attended. A. M. Morris, Daniel Sommer and Leo Boles are the only speakers I now recall by name. Leo distinguished himself (and almost extinguished everyone else) when he stretched his 45 minute speech" to an hour and 45 minutes! There were a deal of speeches allowed from the audience and the issues (regarding use of instrumental music in the worship and aid of human societies in the work of the church) were freely discussed back-and-forth. Once when I thought the assembly was getting unruly Don Carlos Janes rose and said: "Brethren, let us pray," and that did it! Another speaker from the floor was clear cut to a fine point. That night Daniel Sommer, reflecting, said to me: "Watch that young fellow." It was W. L. Totty. . . J. E. Alexander (pastor of Irvington Church of Christ) challenged the entire Christian Church fraternity to public discussion of the organ and society questions. Otto Trinkle, pastor at Englewood, suggested the next meeting be held at Irvington Church of Christ. That church backed away. And yes, Witty and Murch also spoke. Murch has written himself into prominence in the instrument-and-society

wing of the "brotherhood." In his ponderous volume titled "Christians Only" he noted the 1889 mass meeting at Sand Creek, Illinois, where Daniel Sommer "harangued" (Murch said) five thousand or more listeners. (It was there the first public notice of the vital differences was made evident.) Murch also mentioned Sommer's further "tirades" regarding actions of the innovators. He carefully avoided mention of the Christian Standard's invention of the personal smear "Sommerism," but took time and space to print J. C. McQuiddy's use of that smear in **GOSPEL ADVOCATE**. (Earl West, another brotherhood historian, catalogues Sommer as "truculent.") Nor did Murch mention that in 1892 David Lipscomb defended Daniel Sommer's stand against the organatics, and in the same **GOSPEL ADVOCATE**. (I am mystified as to the right application of Murch's "Christians Only.")

Out West of Indianapolis, in a little settlement known as North Salem, years ago, an organ was brought into the meeting house of the church of Christ under cover of darkness. Then began talk of throwing it out the door, whereupon one elder swelled up to this reply: "You'll take that organ out over my dead body." (That sort of speech and the consequent behavior of the "organatics" has convinced me they prefer the organ to my presence.) Yet at that same North Salem a member of the church thought so much of Daniel Sommer that he named his soil Daniel Sommer Robinson, who later, despite that handicap, became president of Butler University. And one Lord's day morning, speaking in The Seventh Christian Church across the street from the Sommer homestead, he informed his audience, when he had finished, that he was going across the street to visit his name-sake who was in his last illness.

By the way, the personal smear "Sommerism" invented by Missionary Society advocates, was later picked up and gleefully used by the Education Society advocates. Cled Wallace said G. C. Goodpasture used the smear, "Sommerism" like the Baptists use the smear "Campbellites" - because neither could meet the real argument.

Some years ago, wife and I dropped down to Madison, Indiana, for a weekend. Sunday morning as we were going out for breakfast we requested the hotel clerk to locate the nearest Church of Christ. On our return he informed us there was no such church there, but that a Christian Church was in walking distance, and that Alexander Campbell once visited there. It was an old brick structure, but commodious inside and we were received cordially. Wife was escorted to a Ladies' class and the preacher took charge of me. He inquired of our church relations and we took our seat in the auditorium. From then on the organ presided! While people came in, the organ played; while the robed choir filed in, the organ played. While the preacher prayed, the organ played; while the Communion was in order, the organ played; it also played during the contribution of money; but it was silent during the sermon and some announcements. Then the preacher called on me for

"dismissal," and the organ softly accompanied me; but at the "Amen" the choir shouted, "Ah-ah-men!" and the organ crashed like a thunder clap! (And continued playing until all had filed out!)

The latest "unity attempt" I have attended was put up for exhibit here in Indianapolis last May. We were only privileged to attend three sessions (heard six speeches). It was a cowardly fiasco! The "differences" were not to be discussed, so W. L. Totty refused to take part in the program. One man talked about "unity and peace," and J. E. Poer countered from the floor, "first pure, then peaceable." David Bobo spoke of the "fear" pervading "the Disciple movement" and made light of those who are satisfied with the revealed Word. One from the floor inquired "if his silence about the innovators was due to fear." Carl Ketcherside was billed to speak on "The Relation of Young People to the Restoration Movement." He regaled us with tales of his experiences with the "hippies," but forgot to tell how he explained the Restoration Movement to them. . . Earl West made a distinctive and welcome contribution to the affair by pointing out who was responsible for the innovations that divide us, also dangers of brotherhood rule by schools and papers. He impressed us as believing the Book as written.

Regarding Ketcherside further, as I have seen him through the years, coming and going, winding around, I am reminded of the old patriarch's "compliment" regarding his son Reuben: "unstable as water." Carl is the whirling dervish of our "brotherhood."

Regarding brethren who prefer the organ in their sanctuaries rather than our presence, I am reminded of the admonition of the prophet Hosea: Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone!"

Reflecting further on our "unity" mockeries I am reminded of this poem by Sam Foss.

THE DISPUTANTS

They met and they talked where the crossroads meet:
Four men from the four winds come;
And they talked of the horse, for they loved the theme,
And never a man was dumb.
And the man from the North loved the strength of the horse,
And the man from the East his pace,
And the man from the South loved the speed of the horse,
The man from the West his grace.
So these four men from the four winds come,
Each paused a space in his course,
And smiled in the -face of his fellowman,

And lovingly talked of his horse.
Then each man parted and went his way
As their different courses ran;
And each man journeyed, with peace in his heart
And loving his fellowman.
They met next year where the crossroads meet
Four men from the four winds come;
And it chanced as they met that they talked of God,
And never a man was dumb.
One imaged God in the shape of man:
A spirit, did one insist;
One said that Nature itself was God;
One said that He didn't exist.
But they lashed each other with tongues that stung,
That smote as with a rod;
Each glared in the face of his fellowman,
And wrathfully talked of God.
Then each man parted and went his way,
As their different courses ran;
And each man journeyed with wrath in his heart,
And hating his fellowman! --And all because they prefer an unauthorized human-
ism in the worship rather than our presence. Rev. 18:21, 22 comes near recording
the only instrumental music in church worship.

LESLIE DIESTELKAMP: "We enjoy fellowship with any brother in Christ, even though he may differ with us, so long as the fellowship does not: (1) involve us in wrong practice, (2) commit us to unscriptural doctrine, or (3) constitute an endorsement of his error." - Leslie Diestelkamp, Think, January 1, 1970.

Limited Fellowship

WM. E. WALLACE

INTRODUCTION:

- A. At this point in the "division" institutional issues should not affect us as Gnosticism did John when he met Cerinthus in the public bath.¹
- B. Segregation from projects but not isolation from brethren.
 - 1. Some degree of fellowship —This is the crux of the subject.
 - 2. The idea of partial fellowship is valid with regard to non-believers (I Cor.10:20, 27) and I believe the same principle makes it valid as to relationship with believers.

Limited fellowship is the sharing of some religious experiences with others while refusing to share other such experiences.

I. FELLOWSHIP — The *KOINON* Group of Words² Derived From *KOINOS* = Common.

- A. *KOINONOS* (10 times in N. T.) - one who shares something with someone, partner, partaker, companion. (Synkoinonos - 4 times in N. T.).
- B. *KOINONEO* (8 times in N. T.).
 - 1. To have a share in something with someone.
 - 2. To give a share in something with someone.
- C. *KOINONIA* (20 times in N. T.) - sharing or giving a share, fellowship.
- D. *KOINONIKOS* (1 time in N. T.).
- E. Synonyms
 - 1. Metecho
 - 2. Metoche
 - 3. Metechos
 - 4. Metal lambano
- F. Withdrawal of Fellowship
 - 1. Moral reasons. I Cor. 5:5.
 - 2. Personal abuse. Mt. 18:15ff.
 - 3. Doctrinal heresy. Rom. 16:17, Titus 3:10.
 - 4. Disorderly conduct. 11 Thess. 3:6.
- G. Judgments Involved in Withdrawal of Fellowship.
 - 1. Rom. 16:18.
 - 2. Philippians 3:18-19.
- H. It is my understanding that, with regard to the institutional issues there is something we can rightfully share with the "liberals," a limited fellowship.

II. FELLOWSHIP IS DELIBERATE

- A. Fellowship is a deliberate sharing or participation with another or others in religious and social experiences.
 - 1. Comradeship
 - 2. Partnership
 - 3. Popular Usage: Recognition as worthy of social and religious intercourse with us.
- B. Areas of religious and social fellowship.
 - 1. Joint membership with others in a congregational relationship.
 - a. Worship
 - b. Service
 - c. Study
 - d. Religio-social association
 - 2. Joint identification with others in a brotherhood of churches of Christ.
 - a. Fellow partakers of grace. Ph. 1:7.
 - b. Joint partakers of gospel. I Cor. 9:23.
 - c. Fellow partakers of promises. Eph. 3:6.
 - d. Fellow partakers of glory. I Pet. 5:1.
 - e. Fellow partakers of body. I Cor. 10: 16-17.
 - f. Joint fellowship with the Holy Spirit. Ph. 2: 1,11 Cor. 13:14.
 - g. Fellow partakers of divine nature. 2 Pet. 1:4.
 - h. Fellow partakers with Christ. I Cor. 1:9, Heb. 3:14.
 - (1) Vine and branches - John 15.
 - (2) Body - Rom. 12:5.
 - i. Horizontal fellowship between man and man is based on vertical fellowship those men have with God. I John 1:3-7.
 - (1) Verse 6 tells who is not in fellowship with God.
 - 3. Joint participation in specific beliefs, and practices.
 - a. Fellow-prisoners - Rom. 16:7.
 - b. Fellow-servants - Col. 1: 7; 4:7; Rev. 6:11.
 - c. Fellow-workers - Rom. 16:21; Col. 4:11.
 - d. Fellow-citizens - Eph. 2:19.

III. AREAS WHERE FELLOWSHIP IS WITHHELD

- A. Congregational
 - 1. Refuse joint-membership to or with individuals in a congregation.
 - 2. Refuse to recognize one worthy of joint participation in worship.
 - 3. Refuse participation in specific acts.
 - a. As in financial support of individuals. Ph. 4:14-17, 11; Cor. 8, 9.
 - b. As in financial support of institutions.
 - 4. Refuse sharing or encouraging of specific beliefs.
- B. Brotherhood

1. Quarantine of men, papers, institutions, projects, movements, schisms, parties, factions, heresies.
2. Two classifications in quarantine.
 - a. Sick with contagious, dangerous diseases.
 - b. Severed by spiritual death.
 - (1) Works of darkness - Eph. 5:11.
 - (2) Schismatic - Rom. 16:17-18.
 - (3) Heretic - 11 Jno. 9-11.

IV. AREAS WHERE FELLOWSHIP IS WRONGLY EXTENDED, AS REGARDS INSTITUTIONALISM

A. Contributions

1. Church grants to institutions or sponsoring church.
2. Individual gifts to church supported institutions or sponsoring church.

B. Endorsements

1. Relegate these "issues" to realm of opinion.
2. Indifference to issues is tantamount to endorsement of propositions.
3. Approval or assent to church support of institutions or sponsoring church.

C. Encouragement

1. Withhold criticism.
2. Contribute to church which grants funds to institutions.
3. Membership in "liberal" church when there are real alternatives such as the existence of a "conservative" church in the community or the opportunity to establish one.

V. ANSWERING THE QUESTION REPRESENTED BY OUR SUBJECT4

- A. "I will not sever all relations with a brother who believes the church treasury should be used to support a benevolent institution."
- B. "But I will not jointly participate with him in such error."
- C. "I will not put my money into a treasury that is used for such, nor will I give encouragement to those who do."
- D. "If he would not seek to force 'joint participation' upon me by putting such institutions in the budget, where my money would be used to support. . . or by making such public avowal and association of the congregation with these institutions, that my very presence indicated approval and encouragement of the error - then we could worship together."
- E. CONCLUSION: The institutional issues should cause us to sever some, not all, relationship with some, not all "liberal" brethren.
 1. Guide lines to "disfellowshipping"
 - a. As to troublemakers - Rom. 16:17, 11 Thess.3:6.
 - b. As to schismatics - Titus 3: 10.
 - c. As to heretics - 11 John 9-10, Jude 3-4.

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2. Guide lines for fellowship:
 - a. We can participate in religio-social relationship with "liberals" when in so doing we do not endorse their error.
 - b. We can participate in religio-social relationships with them when in so doing we do not encourage their error.
 - c. We can participate in religio-social relationships with them when in so doing we do not become a partner in their error.
 - d. We can participate in religio-social relationships with them when in so doing we do not compromise with error.
 - e. We can participate in religio-social relationships with them when in so doing we do not adversely affect the sound cause or aid and abet institutionalism.
 3. Areas of acceptable fellowship.
 - a. Joint worship in song, prayer, communion.
 - b. Debate, dialogue, discussion.
 - c. Joint-battles against common enemies.
 - d. Recognition of liberals as our brethren.
 - e. Religio-social affairs
 4. Contingencies
 - a. It should be noted that the situation varies in different areas— and what is expedient in one locality may not be wise in another.
 - b. The historical and traditional factors involved in the heritage of the Restoration Movement puts the main issues between churches of Christ and Christian Churches in a different category than that involved in institutional issues among us at this time.
 - (1) Christian Church went out from us and we insisted on separate identity in U. S. census of 1906.
 - (2) We do not generally require confession or rebaptism of liberals as we do in case of those who come from "digressives."
 - c. The question as to how other issues should affect fellowship in the body of Christ today should be considered with regard to the circumstances peculiar to those issues.

CONCLUSION:

- A. Purpose of my approach: It is my contention that the situation developing in "liberal" ranks today offers a setting conducive to useful and fruitful communication (fellowship) with them.
- B. Important factor promoting my approach: I do not believe that we can rightfully stereotype all "liberals" as being the same.

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- C. End in view: Now is the time to reverse trends, correct inaccurate images, and repair the breaches in the temple of God where possible. The future may offer dramatic and pleasing surprises to conservative brethren as regards the attitude of liberals toward things we oppose.
- D. "We need the virility of such intellectual confrontation which can be carried on in good taste and without loss of friendship . . . tough with ideas while tender with persons."⁶

NOTES

1. Irenaeus, "Against Heresies" Book III, Chapter III. John is represented as saying "Let us fly, lest even the bath house fall down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of truth is within."
2. **A Theological Word Book of The Bible**, MacMillan, New York, pg. 81-83 (Much of the material appearing under I & I in the outline is taken from this source.
3. By religio-social, I refer to pleasurable associations in which Christians are experiencing fellowship springing from their acquaintance in the church relationship.
4. Quotations from Robert Turner, "Plain Talk," Vol. 6, No. 7, Sept 1969.5
5. My use of "liberal" in this outline refers to those who embrace church support of institutions
6. D. Elton Trueblood, Forword, in "Its in Playboy World," Wm. S. Banowsky, Fleming H. Revell, Co., pg. 12.

The Beginning of Disfellowshipping

Note: After reading this selection please read the article by Cecil Douthitt which follows. Brother Douthitt's response to the "quarantine" appeared in *The GOSPEL GUARDIAN* January 13, 1955.

In the **GOSPEL ADVOCATE** of November 18, 1954 editor B. C. Goodpasture printed a letter from a "well-known" elder concerning alleged hairsplitters, hobby riders, and chronic church-busters. In the **GOSPEL ADVOCATE** of December 9, 1954, the editor printed three of a "number of letters" commending the letter of the November 18 issue. One of these letters in the December 9 editorial page suggested:

"I trust you will not consider me presumptuous if I suggest that perhaps the writers of the **GOSPEL ADVOCATE** might wisely spearhead a movement to 'quarantine' those preachers of today who are sowing seeds of discord among the brotherhood and to thus prevent further division."

This suggestion appearing on the editorial page of the **GOSPEL ADVOCATE**, with the apparent endorsement of the editor, sparked a general cross-the-country disfellowshipping, by **GOSPEL ADVOCATE** influenced churches, of those not in agreement with **GOSPEL ADVOCATE** positions on institutional and sponsoring church issues.

Cecil Douthitt responded to the "quarantine" suggestion in an article entitled "The Yellow Tag of Quarantine" in the **GOSPEL GUARDIAN** of January 13, 1955, showing the evil of the policy and exposing its inconsistencies.

The institutions and sponsoring churches implemented the quarantine lending their power and influence to it. Thus division came.

There had been local church disturbances and divisions over the "issues" before the call for quarantine, and considerable polemic activity had appeared in the papers from the late 1940's. But the beginning of disfellowshipping on a brotherhood scale, over the "issues" is to be dated to the call for quarantine in the **GOSPEL ADVOCATE** of December 9, 1954. The quarantine erroneously stereo-typed all dissenting brethren as members of a "wrecking crew" and failed to give attention to "liberal" brethren who were instigating local divisions by forcing policies into congregations without regard to dissenting voices. -W. E. W.

THE YELLOW TAG OF QUARANTINE

Cecil B. Douthitt

Sincere brethren in Christ hold divergent views on many religious questions. A few of these brethren clearly have indicated lately that they do not want to continue to fellowship those who disagree with them on some of the issues that are disturbing the churches.

One suggested in the **GOSPEL ADVOCATE** of December 9, that we start pinning the yellow tag of quarantine on one another. Here are his words:

"I trust you will not consider me presumptuous if I suggest that perhaps the writers for the **GOSPEL ADVOCATE** might wisely spearhead a movement to quarantine those preachers who today are sowing seeds of discord among the brotherhood and to thus prevent further division."

This statement was given space on the editorial page of the Advocate.

What would be the result, if the writers and friends of the **GOSPEL ADVOCATE** did "spearhead a movement to quarantine" one another? The church would split into a dozen warring factions. There would be a five-way split in the **GOSPEL ADVOCATE** itself; for its writers hold views that are as opposite as the poles. Here, I shall point out only a few of the factions that would spring up as separate and distinct units:

Faction No. 1. Great and good men like G. K. Wallace, Flavil Colley and scores of others believe that orphan homes, homes for the aged, and other eleemosynary institutions that receive contributions from church treasuries should be put under the control of an eldership; that those not under an eldership are parallel to a missionary society. They argue that "There is a parallel between an orphans' home that has a board of trustees other than the elders of the church to do the work of the church, and the United Christian Missionary Society." Gayle Oler, G. C. Brewer, Guy Woods and many other writers and friends of the **GOSPEL ADVOCATE** believe that G. K. Wallace is in error in this statement. When Oler, Brewer, Woods and others hang the yellow tag of quarantine on all who are contending that church supported charity organizations must be under an eldership, then we will have a fully developed **Faction No. 1.**

Faction No. 2. A few of the writers and friends of Advocate are contending that all child-caring facilities that have been made a part of the organizational set-up of a church are neither desirable nor scriptural. Brother Gayle Oler has been swing-

ing some tough blows at Lubbock and Tipton in recent issues of the Boles Home News. Among other things, he hurls this question:

"But why should anyone deem it to be necessary or to be even desirable that any child-caring facility, public or private, be a part of the organizational set-up of the New Testament church when it is obvious that there was no such organizational set-up in the New Testament."

Is Brother Oler a hobby-rider? Is he a "church-buster"? Should he be quarantined? He is shaking his fist at all the good men in Group No. 1, and he has more bitter words in his vocabulary than any gospel preacher I know; if he keeps hurling them, he certainly will disturb Broadway in Lubbock. Does the Advocate quarantiner think it is time now to hang the yellow tag on Gayle, or should we wait till he gets in another punch or two at Lubbock and Tipton?

Of course Brother Oler knows "there was no such organizational set-up in the New Testament" as his church supported "child-caring facility" which is not under an eldership, and yet he thinks his "facility" is necessary, desirable and scriptural.

Just how hot the fight will wax between those who hold the views expressed by G. K. Wallace, and those who hold the views expressed by Gayle Oler, no man knows. But we do know, if they follow the suggestion of the Advocate editorial, and pin yellow tags of quarantine on each other, then the fur will fly.

I do not consider either of these groups to be a faction and I have no intention of participating in a quarantine of either, and I hope that brethren Wallace and Oler do not quarantine each other.

Faction No. 3. Another faction that would develop, if the Advocate writers "spearhead a movement to quarantine those preachers" whom they call obnoxious creed-makers, would consist of those brethren who think that both Gayle and G. K. are wrong; those brethren who think it is scriptural and right for churches to include child-caring facilities in their "organizational set-up" as in Broadway in Lubbock, and that it is scriptural and right to donate funds from church treasuries to child-caring organizations not under an eldership, such as Boles Home.

Some of the Advocate writers are saying some stout words about all the brethren who agree with either G. K. Wallace or Gayle Oler. Guy woods and Cecil Wright say that he who holds to one of these plans and opposes the other has:

"abandoned the role of a believer and assumed that of a legislator. He is presuming to speak where God has not spoken. He is engaged *in* the business of

creed-making. And, his course is no less obnoxious, because his creed is unwritten, or because he is one of the brethren."

Are Guy and Cecil ready to hang the yellow tag of quarantine on G. K. and Gayle? If they do, we cannot expect G. K. and Gayle to do less than hang the same tag on Guy and Cecil, then they all will be quarantined.

Faction No. 4. A few brethren teach that church donations to Bible colleges are scriptural. Occasionally, one in this gets all wrought up and calls the brethren who disagree with him, "half-baked Sommerites," "Johnnys come lately," and many other unbrotherly appellations.

If the advice of the Advocate editorial is followed, then N. B. Hardeman, G. C. Brewer, Sterl Watson and all who think it is scriptural for churches to give money from their treasuries to Bible colleges must hang the yellow tag of quarantine on James Cope, Cecil Douthitt, L. R. Wilson, Rex Turner, E. R. Harper and all who teach that it is unscriptural for churches to contribute to Bible colleges. Then we must hang the quarantine tag on Hardeman, Brewer and all who teach as they do on this question. Then we all will be duly tagged, branded, labeled and quarantined, and brethren everywhere can tell at a glance to which faction each belongs.

Time would fail me, if I should tell of the warring factions that would result from a quarantining of brethren who hold different views on centralized oversight, remote control, ecumenical institutions for brotherhood action and a dozen other issues that are with us always.

I do not believe that the groups described above are factions yet; I have set forth merely what I think would result, if we start a disfellowshipping campaign among ourselves.

This business of quarantining one another is a game that more than one can play "at." It might turn out to be a boomerang. The evangelist, or elder, or editor, who undertakes to hang a yellow tag of quarantine on all who do not agree with him, might return home with more quarantine tags hanging on his own coat tail than he was able to pin on others.

For example, how many churches would invite E. R. Harper, James Cope or Cecil Douthitt to come among them, if they thought we would try to quarantine every one we met, who did not agree with us that it is unscriptural for churches to give money to Bible colleges? During the past six months, I have had more invitations for meetings, received more letters asking if I would consider working permanently with other churches, and bigger financial offers, than I have ever had during any other six month period in the forty years that I have been trying to preach.

These brethren who invited me know just where I stand on everything, and some of them do not agree with me on some things; but I do not think any of them would want me, if I went about advocating a quarantining of brethren on issues that do not justify a severance of fellowship. Some issues do justify it; but these issues do not yet.

Yes, this thing could be a boomerang. I remember reading somewhere of a man named Haman who built a gallows fifty cubits high on which to hang Mordecai. Haman thought that he was so strong and influential that he could treat the other fellow any way he wished, and get away with it. "And Haman recounted unto them the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king." So, with a feeling of absolute security Haman made that gallows. But "they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai." God had a way of making Ant thing backfire, and Haman himself "got it in the neck."

Somewhere I remember reading of a Pharisee who trusted in himself that he was righteous, "and set all others at nought." But Jesus said that this man and all others like him "shall he humbled." I believe Jesus meant it; I believe his warnings; I believe his promises. The Lord has a way of giving all Hamans and all self-righteous people a dose of their own medicine. There is not a religious paper of any size among us, whose writers agree on everything. And if any editor thinks his paper is so mighty and influential that he can launch a quarantine campaign against all who do not agree with him on the way the churches should do their work, and not produce a multiple split among his own supporters, just let him launch it, and learn the hard way. Haman thought he was mighty, influential and secure. But his neck was no harder for God to break, than the neck of a mouse.

Quarantine or suppression or an iron curtain is not the solution to our problems as they exist at this time; nor are all these things combined the solution. The only right course is the one pursued by the brethren as recorded in Acts 15. They engaged in an open and honorable discussion of the issue that troubled them. Speeches were made by men on both sides. There was "much questioning," and this "much questioning" was not done by one side only. No one was suppressed. When every body had had his say, James made a speech and read Amos 9:11,12, and that determined the matter. The issue was settled by the truth of God's word as it appeared in Amos 9:11,12, and not by quarantine, iron curtain or suppression of brethren who were sincere and wanted to be heard. Why can't we settle our differences the same way? Why can't we meet in honorable and orderly discussion, and settle our differences by the truth of God's word, as our brethren did in Jerusalem nineteen hundred years ago? The truth never suffers in honorable discussion. The

truth itself is antidote to all the poisonous error presented in debate. Isn't our history since Pentecost an everlasting monument to that fact?

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah." (Isaiah 1:18.)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Eugene Britnell

Send all questions to: Eugene Britnell, P.O. Box 3012, Little Rock, Arkansas 72203

From Oneonta, Alabama:

(Note: The following letter was addressed to brother Tant. He wrote a personal reply and then sent the letter to me with the suggestion that it would be profitable material for this column. *E. B.*)

"A good friend of mine and I were discussing recently the nature of the present division within the Church of Christ, and possible ways to heal and mend the tear. Since both of us have many associations with brethren of both sides, we are aware of the prominent attitudes held by each, and we have concluded that errors exist on both sides in all situations about which we know the details. And we are sure that neither side is happy with a divided brotherhood.

"We have wondered about the possibilities of a 'compromise such as has been used in one area. And this is: Each person gives to the general fund that is collected each Sunday which is used to pay the preacher, do mission work, pay utilities, etc. In the Sunday school classes, another collection is taken, from which is sent to an orphan home a very small amount, flowers are paid for, and other acts of benevolence are taken care of. Of course, there is no requirement for the latter. It is a matter of the free will. If others wish to give to orphans in other ways, they do so as they wish.

"In the interest of peace and unity, how would this work out? Would it be accepted?

"Both of us agree that no amount of hate can unite us. It must be done through brotherly love. In spite of some possible objections, we do not feel that the above proposal denies the Lordship and Rulership of Jesus.

"We feel one of the saddest facts known to us about brethren who support orphan homes, etc., is that they are not looking for alternatives which would both heal the division and do the work of benevolence, etc. And so, if the above proposal is accepted, we could call upon all these to seek for this alternative or others.

"To be briefer and to state our question in concise terms, why can we not assemble together and Work together, but at the same time, allow each of us to act as he sees fit, particularly as stated in the above example?"

The Bible says, "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (Romans 14:19). In the language of another passage, this simply means that We should "endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). The apostle also said, "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." (I Cor. 1: 10) Our desire for the peace which is described in the first two verses, must not cause us to violate that which is involved in the last verse. It does not allow unity in diversity, as some seem to believe; at least, not the unity of the Spirit or that which belongs in the realm of faith.

I certainly encourage any reasonable and scriptural efforts toward unity and peace in a congregation. I realize that there is a realm of opinion, and I endorse the slogan of the restoration era, "in matters of opinion, liberty" as a safe criterion. I also understand that it is difficult to set a standard which is applicable to all congregations and situations.

I question all intra-congregation organizations and works on the same basis that I oppose inter-congregational. organizations. In many churches today, classes have their own projects, officers and treasuries. I find no scriptural authority for such. Some people deny that the church can have a treasury, and others feel that it can have many. It is my understanding that the members of a congregation may contribute into and maintain a common treasury (e.g. I Cor. 16:2). This treasury is under the oversight of the elders, as is the church and its work. Any work of the church may be supported from this treasury.

But what about these other treasuries within a congregation? Are they under the oversight of the elders? If classes and groups may function apart from the church and the elders, just how much of the work of the church might they take over? And if these projects do not come within the purview of the church and its work, why are they connected with the church in any way?

The practice which we are discussing is the same as the "box-in-the-vestibule" practice. While I appreciate the sincerity of those who have proposed this as a possible solution to the problem in many congregations, I doubt that it is. In the first place, I have never understood why those who desire to support a certain work cannot do so directly without involving the church in any sense vestibule and all. This reminds me of the annual problem which many have with the United Fund.

The ardent supporters of the U. F. seem to feel that your contribution to some worthy work, made directly by you, is not as effective as it would be if given through the Fund. But why not? If I desire to contribute to the Heart Fund, I can do so directly and without contributing into a fund out of which some objectionable works are financed. We do not ask the U. F. to set up another fund or treasury into which those of us who cannot support doctrinal error may contribute. We just leave them alone and contribute directly. Likewise, why should we expect the church to furnish the means, or become involved in any sense, in our support of works which some in the church oppose? If I want to support some college or benevolent work — or anything else — I can do so directly without offending anyone or involving the church or any other Christian in any way. And if it is not a work of the church, or some in the congregation feel that it isn't, that is exactly what I should do!

It is my conviction that the "box-in-the-vestibule" or any separate treasury which is kept before the church is an obvious sign of division, and a perpetual source of agitation and strife. Imagine, if you can, a separate collection box in the building with First Corinthians 1: 10 written out on it!

I'm sure that error (in doctrine and/or attitude) exists on both sides, and I do not oppose "looking for alternatives which would heal the division." However, I don't believe that such can be found in compromise; this is only "symptomatic relief" (as the drug makers would express it) of the problem.

To all who would endeavor to keep the "unity of the Spirit," the solution seems so simple. Let the church be the church and do the work of the church. If a brother cannot prove by the Bible (and to the satisfaction of those who contribute into the church treasury) that what he desires to support is a work of the church, then let him support it directly. And the church is not obligated to placate him by providing the means whereby he can remind others constantly of his convictions and disagreement.