

## CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.

THERE is a tendency among God's people to cement fellowships as well as to make divisions upon various unscriptural lines.

As illustrations: The various branches of the Presbyterian family have each its own system of theology and its own methods of worship. They are one family and have a special sympathy or fellowship upon the doctrine of Calvin – that everything that comes to pass was foreordained. Among Baptists, although there are many subdivisions of them, there is a common bond of fellowship in water-immersion. No matter what else a man holds or does not hold, if he practice immersion there is at once a sympathetic fellowship. So also it is among Premillennialists: They feel that any other differences, almost, should be overlooked if their point of special interest is acknowledged.

We protest that none of these are *true* grounds for the fellowship taught in the Scriptures; and that the rejection of any or all of these is not the Scriptural ground for refusing fellowship in Christ.

The Scriptural basis of fellowship and disfellowship is both a much broader and a much more simple one. It is simply of two parts: (1) *An acceptance of Christ as the Redeemer*, and (2) *A full consecration to him*. Whoever complies with this scriptural formula is entitled to the love, respect, sympathy and care of every other such one; for such, and such only, constitute the Church which God recognizes – the Church "whose names are written in heaven."

And if the above proposition be true as indicating who are worthy of our fellowship, it must be true also that any one who cannot claim fellowship upon this basis has no claim to it at all.

All Christians should see that this rule is broad enough to unite all of *God's people*, and narrow enough to exclude *all others*, including those who would seek to "climb up some other way." (John 10:1.) And if this simple test – the only one recognized by the early Church – is *sufficient*, let us recognize it and none other.

But, says an objector, such a simple basis of faith would let in all sorts of false doctrines and would divide the Church of Christ. No, we answer; the Church is already divided. It would tend to reunite the true ones and to separate the worldly and the false. Upon so broad a platform all true Christians could come together for the study of God's Word. Methodists would find themselves studying the principles of *election, baptism*, etc., while Presbyterians and Baptists would find themselves studying free grace and free agency. The result to all (after sectarian considerations were gone) would soon be harmony – Bible harmony.

But, says another, so broad a platform would compel us to fellowship Unitarians and Christian Scientists and Spiritualists. Not at all, we answer. None of these believe in Jesus *as their Redeemer*. It would exclude all such and all others who deny that man is a sinner under divine condemnation, and that "Christ died *for OUR SINS*," "the just *for* the unjust, that he might bring us to God." It would and should exclude all who do not recognize this essential base of Christianity. (Possibly a few believers in the *ransom* may call themselves by the above names, ignorantly – not appreciating the doctrines upon which they are built. We refer to the views of the leaders and the masses of these denominations.)

A man may be honest and sober and in every way moral and be a Buddhist or a Mohammedan or an Infidel (an unbeliever as to the claims of Christ) of any other shade. Morality and general decency may be proper enough grounds for their recognition socially, as friends and acquaintances; but these constitute no claim whatever upon the sacred name of Christian, nor upon the close heart-

sympathy which should make *truly one* all who are trusting in the precious blood of Christ – our ransom-price from sin and death – and who are fully consecrated to him.

We are living in the time when past and present combinations and doctrines of men will be breaking to pieces; when many are, and many more will be, seeking [R3673 : page 359] *fresh grounds* for fellowship; when it is important that all true Christians should stand fast, and shoulder to shoulder defend the foundation principles upon which we stand – the rock foundation; – for "other [proper] foundation can no man lay."

How our great Adversary would like to get the soldiers of the cross confused and separated, following different affinities, rallying around different standards, and hence leaving the true standard – "the cross of Christ," the "Ransom" – undefended. Let all who see the *true* standard assemble to it, and separate themselves in heart and Christian fellowship from all the unclean [those unjustified by faith in the redeeming blood, and clothed still, therefore, in the filthy garments of their own unrighteousness, instead of the wedding garment of Christ's imputed righteousness]. Let their efforts be for and with each other; to present each other blameless and unreprouvable, without spot or wrinkle, before the Heavenly Bridegroom. Hear the Word of the Lord: –

"Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people: cast up, cast up the highway, gather out the [stumbling] stones; LIFT UP A STANDARD for the people." Isa. 62:10.

Let us assure ourselves, from a study of God's Word, that it is as much a part of our duty to *disfellowship* (as Christians) those who, either directly or indirectly, deny that Christ gave himself a ransom [a corresponding price] for all, and who, hence, are the worst enemies of the cross of Christ, as it is our duty to fellowship any who confess him thus as their Saviour; and who, hence, are our

"Brethren" in him. We are to "have *no fellowship* with the unfruitful works of darkness, but should rather reprove them."

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