



Entered as second class matter March 31, 1947, at Lufkin, Texas under the act of Congress, March 3, 1879. Published weekly, except the first week in July and the last week of December, at the office of the Gospel Guardian Co., 1422 North Timberland Drive, Lufkin, Texas. Owner and Publisher, Wm. E. Wallace, Editor, Fanning Yater Tant.

RATES
\$5.00 per year in advance

(Churches sending the Gospel Guardian to every family earn the special \$3.00 per family rate, payable monthly)

Editorial

BROTHER KETCHERSIDE ON "FELLOWSHIP"

We carry an article this week by Brother Carl Ketcherside setting forth his position on "fellowship." This is a word, and a subject, about which millions of words have been written, defining, explaining, expounding, interpreting, etc. We really don't think it is all that difficult. The several possibilities are all set forth, either explicitly or implicitly, in the Scriptures:

1. People may be in complete fellowship with one another, yet not a single one of them be in fellowship with the Lord, or with the people of the Lord. "I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils." (I Cor. 10:20.) The demons have fellowship with one another, and those who are unrighteous are in fellowship with one another (II Cor. 6:14),

yet none of them is in fellowship with the Lord.

2. One may have fellowship with the church, and yet not have fellowship with the Lord. The incestuous brother of I Corinthians 5, is an excellent example of this. He was apparently held in full fellowship and even high regard with the church—but not with God.
3. One may be in fellowship with God, yet not in fellowship with some particular church. Diotrephes "cast out of the church" those righteous brethren who would have received the Apostle John. These brethren were not "in fellowship" in the congregation where Diotrephes had the preeminence; but they were in fellowship with the Lord. (III John 9, 10.)

But the true fellowship with God, and with fellow Christians, is very simple: Every person on the earth who is in fellowship with God is, ipso facto, in fellowship with every other person on the earth who enjoys the same relationship with God. Which reduces the problem to a somewhat more elemental and less complicated level.

The question then resolves into: Who has fellowship with God? This is a question of fact, and is not always easy to determine. Do all baptized believers, regardless of the nature of their lives or the extent of their doctrinal error, have fellowship with God? Obviously not, for John states, "If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." (I Jno. 1:6) The Thessalonians were commanded by the Apostle Paul to "withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they received from us." (II Thess. 3:6) Again, "A factious man after a first and second admonition refuse; knowing that such a one is perverted, and sinneth, being self-condemned." (Titus 3:10.) To the Romans, also, Paul wrote, "Now, I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions

and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them." (Rom. 16:17.)

Brother Ketcherside firmly believes that devout and sincere disciples in the Christian Church (churches which use instrumental music in their worship, and have now 'structured' themselves into a fullfledged denomination from the earlier simplistic forms of the Missionary Societies; churches which gladly welcome women pastors into their pulpits, observe the Lord's Supper on Thursday night, or any other time their pleasure may dictate; churches which for many decades now have welcomed the 'pious unimmersed' into their fellowship)—Brother Ketcherside contends that full and fraternal fellowship should exist between these churches and those congregations which seek to hold unwaveringly to "the faith once delivered." But have these brethren, or have they not, "caused division and occasions of stumbling contrary to the doctrine?" Do their present practices perpetuate that division? Is God pleased with the havoc they wrought among his people, and with the "darkness" in which they are now walking? Their sincerity and honesty we do not question—at least, not the present generation. It is perhaps more difficult to credit their fathers with either honesty or sincerity. But honesty and sincerity are not the criteria of judgment. The word of truth, the holy scripture is the standard.

It was the brethren who introduced the Missionary Societies and instrumental music into the worship of God who "caused division contrary to the doctrine," and who now continue to "walk in the darkness." The only fellowship which can be had with them is a fellowship in darkness and in unrighteousness. In which case, fellowship with God is broken.

Does this mean, then, that no fellowship can be had between brethren who honestly and sincerely differ in their understanding of the will of God? We think not; for the principle of love, as set forth by Paul in Romans 14, makes full room for a wide diversity of both beliefs and practices. It is

the divisive spirit, the unyielding insistence on forcing other brethren to conform to a chosen way or practice which does the damage. The instrumental music brethren refused to give up their piano, and forced conscientious brethren out of their congregations because of it; the brethren advocating centralized cooperative arrangements for congregational action (such as the Herald of Truth) fell into the same sad quagmire of lovelessness and all over the nation have precipitated division and sadness among God's people. There are hopeful signs in many areas that many individuals in both the instrumental music group and the "centralized cooperatives" may be coming to a better realization of the error that has been made. Whatever progress Brother Ketcherside can make in promoting such understanding will indeed be welcome. Meanwhile, a great host of congregations, made up of simple Christians, all over the world will continue to hold fast to God's word, doing God's work in God's way, worshipping God according to the divine pattern. Any Christian on the face of the earth can work and worship in one of these congregations "in full assurance of faith" with no violence done to his conscience at all.

Will Brotherside join with us in seeking to build such churches?

—F. Y. T.

Baker's Bible Atlas

Charles F. Pfeiffer. Has features which will be appreciated by all students of Scripture. It is completely new and up-to-date. It is an atlas in the true sense of the word, as the emphasis is on geography. The atlas is organized to follow the Scriptural narrative.

The atlas has 26 full-color maps, numerous black and white maps, and over 70 photographs to illustrate the text.

..... \$7.95

Do you know what direction and how far Antioch is from Jerusalem? Do you know what direction Israel traveled to reach Caanan from Egypt? Here is an unexcelled atlas. It is both interesting and informative. Order it today!

THE GOSPEL GUARDIAN COMPANY