

DAWN CHRISTADELPHIAN BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

Part 2

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Part 2 – Sections 1 - 13

Dawn Christadelphian Bible Correspondence Course

The Bible is the Inspired Word of God. Anyone who clearly understands its message and obeys its command to be baptised into Christ has, in the mercy of God, the hope of Eternal Life upon this earth, when Jesus returns. This reward is conditional upon living a life in accordance with God and Christ's commandments.

Section 13

13.0 **RESPONSIBILITY AND DUTY** - The Scriptures teach us that God chooses certain men and women - 1Corinthians 1v23-31; John 6v44; Romans 9v11-12; Ephesians 1v4-12 *"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will...."*; 4v22-24.

13.1 Belief and understanding are essential. - Proverbs 13v13; Psalm 69v13; *"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile."* - Romans 1v16. If what was believed, before knowing this True Gospel from the Scriptures, was not according to God's Word, then there is a need to be baptised. Sadly, the baptism before was not valid and in accordance with God's will.

13.1.1 Repentance - a change of mind — required. *"'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!'"* - Mark 1v15.

13.1.2 **Will Faith Alone Save us?**
(Study)

Faith alone will not save us - James 2v14-18 – *"What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do."* From this statement of the Spirit Word - a person can have a dead faith.

A living faith is shown by a person who demonstrates his belief, or faith in God by what he does. v21 *"Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?"* Now look at Hebrews 11v17-19 – *"By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, 'It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.' Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death."* If Abraham had said 'Yes, I believe that God will raise Isaac, my son from the dead, but disobeyed God's command to offer him in sacrifice, this sort of faith is a disbelieving faith - a dead faith without works, without obedience. God shows this in Genesis 22v12-18 - *"because you have obeyed me"* therefore God blessed him. His 'works' showed his 'faith' or belief in God.

Paul tells us in 1Thessalonians 1v2-3 *"We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."* See also v8; James 2v20, 22, 24 and v26. In Peter we read — 1Peter 1v7 *"These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed."*

13.1.3 WHO WILL RISE FROM THE DEAD? WHO WILL BE JUDGED WHEN CHRIST RETURNS?
(Study)

The Responsible - those who know the TRUE GOSPEL will rise from the dead - baptised or not baptised:

Daniel 12 v 2 - *"Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake; some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever."*

Matthew 13v49-50 - *"This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

Luke 12v8-9 - *"I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God."*

Luke 13v24-30 - *"Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us'. But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from'. Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evil doers!' There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the Kingdom of God. Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last."*

Romans 2 v 6-12 - *"God will give to each person according to what he has done'. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honour and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honour and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. 'For God does not show favouritism. All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law.' v 16 - *"This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares."**

Those not responsible (who do not know the True Gospel) will not rise from the dead nor will they be brought to the Judgement Seat of Christ

Psalms 49v19-20 - *"he will join the generation of his fathers, who will never see the light of life. A man who has riches without understanding is like the beasts that perish."*

Psalms 88v5 - *"I am set apart with the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom you remember no more, who are cut off from your care."*

Isaiah 26v14 - *"They are now dead, they live no more; those departed spirits **do not rise**. You punished them and brought them to ruin; you wiped out all memory of them."*

13.2 Christ is our example in all things. The power of prayer and its necessity - Hebrews 2v17; 4v15-16; 7v25 *"Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them."*; 13v15; Romans 8v34; Philippians 4v6-7 *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,*

present your requests to God.....”; James 5v15-18 “And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.” ; Matthew 6v7-15; Luke 18v1 and v10-14.

13.2.1

OUR EQUALITY IN CHRIST

(Study)

Galatians 3v28: *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”*

This is our equality in Christ Jesus, and we should not despise anyone of God's children. v26 *“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus”* Men and women.

Matthew 18v10: *“See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.”*

Luke 18v9-14: *“To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable.... for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”*

Romans 14v3-10: *“The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand... You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.”*

1Corinthians 1v27-29: *“But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are, so that no-one may boast before him.”*

But though we are one in Christ Jesus - this equality must not be allowed to break the type or pattern set by God. The due order is in 1Corinthians 11v3: *“...the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.”* Why is this we ask? The woman represents the ecclesia - the body of Christ - Ephesians 5v24; 29; 32. The man represents Christ - the head of the body - Ephesians 1v22-23. The husband - 2Corinthians 11v2; The bridegroom - Matthew 9v15. The symbolic marriage - Revelation 19v7-8.

The woman must therefore have her head covered, because she, representing the ecclesia, as the bride of Christ, has had her sins covered by Christ's perfect obedience to His Father - even unto death; Philippians 2v8. We are told in 1Corinthians 11v5 that *“every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her head.”* - (which is Christ). Because, in effect, we are implying that his perfect obedience unto death was unnecessary and that his bride (or body or ecclesia) does not have sins to be covered, which is disobedience to God and Christ's commandments.

On the other hand, for a man to appear covered would dishonour his head, even Christ, by implying that Jesus had sins to be covered. Both man and woman are equal in Christ, but both must fulfil the type for which they are appointed. 1 Corinthians 11v7 *“A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man.”*

Again we say Galatians 3v28: *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."* This applies also to so-called class distinction, whether we are richer or poorer than our brothers and sisters and whether we come from a different tribe. All this IN CHRIST should not make any difference. We should *"Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no-one will see the Lord."* Hebrews 12v14. Therefore Christ said *"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."* John 13v34-35. Christ will soon be back on earth to set up God's Kingdom where the types will give way to reality and righteousness will be equal unto the angels.

13.3 The need for daily reading of the Bible - Psalm 119v9-16, 97, 105; 1Timothy 4v13 and 15. *"Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching..... Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress."*

13.4.1 Breaking of Bread – When Christ died his blood was poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Isaiah 53v3-9. 1Corinthians 11v23-29; *"For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognising the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself."* - Luke 22v15-20. Meet on Sunday, the first day of the week to remember Jesus by taking the bread and wine in memory: *"On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people"* - Acts 20v7 . To be renewed in hope.

13.4.2 General Behaviour: to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, obeying Christ's commands to the best of our ability, showing love to one another - Philippians 2v12-13 *"Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."* John 14v15 *"If you love me, you will obey what I command."*; 15v7-12; Matthew 5; Ephesians 5v21-32; Colossians 3v8-10 *"But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator."*; Galatians 5v19-24; Matthew 7.

13.5.1

FASTING

(Study)

Abstinence from food and drink for long periods appears in Scripture as a means of expressing grief, designed to excite the compassion of God, with a view to the removal, and the avoidance of threatened calamities, national or personal - Judges 20v26; 2Samuel 1v12.

Certain days of sorrowful memory in Israel were set apart for fasting, and special occasions were frequent on where this exercise was acceptable. Associated with appeal to God, fasting came to be regarded as lending effectiveness to prayer. The man who fasted and prayed gained benefit and respect from his friends. This was an outward appearance and led inevitably to the hypocrisy which Jesus so sternly condemned - Matthew 6v18 *"Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you*

need before you ask him. "This, then, is how you should pray: " `Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.' For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

Of Fasting as a moral and spiritual discipline there is no sure trace in Scripture; but such a passage as Daniel 9v3 may mean that it was used to produce a mind in keeping with Godliness, or God-like mind. Jesus possibly, and his followers certainly, as religious Hebrews, observed the practices of their people in this as in other respect - Acts 13v2; But the Bible does not provide the approval for the practices found in the churches of later times. We read Paul's words to the Colossians - 2v20-23 *"Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch! ? These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence."*

The word *'fasting'* is no part of the genuine text in Matthew 17v21; Mark 9v29 and 1Corinthians 7v5.

13.5.2

FASTS

(Study)

In the Mosaic Law the Day of Atonement alone is marked out as an annual Fast. – Leviticus 16v29. On that day, the children of Israel should 'deny yourself' or 'you must fast'. It fell on the tenth day of the seventh month. The people observed certain Fasts during the exile, one in the fifth, and one in the seventh month – Zechariah 7v5. In each of these months there was a day of sorrowful memory for the Jews; which may have been the day set apart for humiliation and fasting.

On the ninth day of the fourth month of Zedekiah's eleventh year, Jerusalem was taken - Jer.39v2; 52v6. On the tenth day of the fifth month, Jerusalem was destroyed - Jeremiah 52v12.

13.6 The first commandment is to love the Lord your God; Matthew 22v36-38 *"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: " `Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment."*

13.6.1 The second commandment is to love your neighbour as yourself - Matthew 22v39-40 *"And the second is like it: `Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."*; 1Corinthians 13; Romans 15v1-7.

13.6.2 Preach the Gospel: Mark 16v15; 1Corinthians 9v16; Acts 28v31 *"Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ"*.

13.6.3 Minister to other people: Matthew 25v35-40 *"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." "Then the righteous will answer him, `Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in*

prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'; Luke 10v29-37;

- 13.6.4 Attendance at the 'breaking of bread' and other Bible Study meetings with brethren and sisters: *"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching." – Hebrews 10v25; "Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honoured his name." - Malachi 3v16.*
- 13.7 Particular Behaviour. Avoid giving offence: 1Corinthians 8v9-13 *"Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol's temple, won't he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols? So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall."; Proverbs 18v19.*
- 13.7.1 Avoid evil, pride and materialism of the world. Colossians 3v1-10 *"Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming..... But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator."; 2Timothy 3v1-11; Luke 17v26-30.*
- 13.7.2 Sexual intercourse outside of marriage is unscriptural: Galatians 5v19-25; 1Thessalonians 4v3-9 *"...It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you."; 1Corinthians 5v1; 6v9-20.*
- 13.7.3 To obtain stimulus and seek pleasure from drugs, alcohol and smoking is condemned: - Ephesians 5v15-21; 1Peter 4v3; 1Timothy 3v3; Proverbs 20v1 - *"Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise."; 1Corinthians 5v11 – "But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat."*
- 13.7.4 Do not steal: - Matthew 19v18 – Jesus says: *"..... do not steal, do not give false testimony."; Romans 13v9; Ephesians 4v28.*
- 13.7.5 Avoid criticising others: - Matthew 7v1-5 – *"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."; Colossians 3v5-6.*
- 13.7.6 Course of action when dealing with complaints against another: - Matthew 18v15-17 – *"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens*

to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.", 21-22; Matthew 5v21-25.

- 13.8 The word "saint" means "separated one" - separated from the world: Acts 15v14; 1John 2v15-17; James 4v4 – *"You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God."*; John 15v18-19 - *"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you."*; John 17v15-26; James 1v27.

- 13.8.1 Marry only true believers who live according to the commands of God and Christ. 1 Corinthians 7v39 (Where already married, do not separate): see 1Corinthians 7v1-17. 2Corinthians 6v14-18: *"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."*

13.8.2

Marriage
(Study)

Its Divine Origin

Marriage is a divine institution. It was ordained by God in the beginning when God created Eve from a rib of Adam's side. Read Genesis 2v18-24. This was the original divine standard of marriage. One man, one woman united for life.

This original standard was reiterated by Christ, Mark 10v6-9 - *"But at the beginning of creation God made them male and female". "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."* This original divine standard must be upheld by all true followers of Christ.

Marriage - "only in the Lord"

Marriage with the idolatrous nations around them was strictly forbidden to Israel in the past. Read Deuteronomy 7v2-4. The consequences of marriage with those who do not live according to the commandments of Christ is seen in the case of Solomon, 1Kings 11v1-9. Also in Ezra 9v2 *"They have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, and have mingled the holy race with the peoples around them. And the leaders and officials have led the way in this unfaithfulness."* and Nehemiah 13v23-25 *"Moreover, in those days I saw men of Judah who had married women from Ashdod, Ammon and Moab. Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod or the language of one of the other peoples, and did not know how to speak the language of Judah. I rebuked them and called curses down on them. I beat some of the men and pulled out their hair. I made them take an oath in God's name and said: "You are not to give your daughters in marriage to their sons, nor are you to take their daughters in marriage for your sons or for yourselves."*

Marriage with the unbeliever is just as clearly forbidden to "spiritual" Israel. Read 2Corinthians 6v14-18; 1Corinthians 7v39. In view of the very clear scriptural teaching on this matter, it is evident that marriage with the unbeliever would necessitate our withdrawal of fellowship. This, however, does not mean that if any come into the Truth already married they have to separate from their partners to whom they still have a responsibility. See 1Corinthians 7v12-14. Their aim should be to try and bring

the partner into the Truth by preaching and example.

Divorce and Re-marriage

If we are endeavouring to uphold the original divine standard of marriage, any question of divorce is unthinkable. Christ clearly taught that divorce and subsequent re-marriage constituted adultery. Read the relevant scriptures:- Matthew 5v31-32; Matthew 19v3-9; Mark 10v2-12 ; Luke 16v18.

The references in Mark and Luke are quite clear. There can be no divorce and no re-marriage without any exception. In the references in Matthew, however, Christ says "*except it be for fornication*" (marital unfaithfulness), appearing to allow divorce for this one reason. What did Christ mean by this? There are some, with whom we are not in fellowship, who contend that Christ here allowed divorce and re-marriage where one partner had proved unfaithful and had committed adultery. But this is not what Christ said. In the passage he uses two quite distinct words for "adultery" and "fornication" and they are not interchangeable. We must remember that in the references in Matthew, Christ was contending with the Pharisees and was contrasting their law and tradition with his own teaching. In the record in Matthew ch 19 he was actually answering a question put to him by them "tempting" him. It was not a sincere question but one intended to trap him. At the time there was a contention between two of the Jewish sects regarding the question of divorce, one holding that divorce was allowable under the Mosaic law for almost any reason. That is why they phrased the questions: "*Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?*" They wanted to see which "side" Christ would take. But what did Christ do? First of all, he took them right back to the beginning, to the original divine law. That was *his* standard of marriage. But, as he was speaking to Jews, under the Law, he did concede to them that the Mosaic law did allow divorce for one - and only one - reason. This cause we find in Deuteronomy 24v1-4. From Exodus 22v16-17 we can deduce that the "uncleanness" was unchastity before marriage which was not discovered until after the marriage had taken place. It certainly was not adultery which, under the Law, was punishable by death. In referring to this law, Christ used the word "fornication" (marital unfaithfulness – Greek for this word is 'porneia') but added that even such a provision under their Law was only because "*your hearts were hard*".

It is very clear from Christ's words that *his* standard was the original divine standard in Eden and that any divorce and re-marriage was adultery. The Greek word for 'adultery' is 'moichao'. We should note that in the Mark record, when his own disciples later asked him again about the matter privately 'in the house' he made no exceptions. His words were quite clear - Mark 10v12. That is the standard which all of his disciples must uphold.

Under this section, mention should be made, however, of the position of any who ***before coming to a knowledge of the Truth***, have divorced and re-married. The question may be asked whether they should be required to separate before being baptised. The answer is that as they were divorced and re-married whilst ignorant of the commands of Christ, they were not at that time responsible. They can, therefore, be accepted as legally married subject to an undertaking from then onwards, to uphold the law of Christ in this as in all other matters.

Polygamy

It is clear that the original divine standard of marriage is "*one man, one wife*". In most countries now polygamy is illegal. In countries, however, where it is still permissible, any, who, before being responsible to the commandments of God and Christ, had more than one *wife should continue to support them*. He/she would however, not be free to contract any further marriage on becoming a brother or sister. This situation apparently existed in the 1st Century and it is instructive to note that when Paul gave directions concerning the appointment of elders he stressed that only those with 'one wife' should be eligible. 1Timothy 3v1-12; Titus 1v5-9. This was because, being in the public eye and having to guide the ecclesias in right ways, they had themselves to be, as far as humanly possible, above reproach.

13.8.3

Should Believers Marry Unbelievers?

(Study)

There is a general impression to the effect that the objection to marriage with the unbeliever is founded on the expression of Paul in 1Corinthians 7v39, that widows are at liberty to marry again for *"she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord."* It will be found on investigation that this is a mistake. Paul's expression taken in its special connection is certainly a strong indication: but the objection to mixed marriages stands on a much broader ground. It is involved in the broad principle that the consecration required by Christ at the hands of his people is so complete as to exclude friendship with the present world. *"You do not belong to the world" - "Therefore come out from them and be separate" - "don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred towards God?"* These restrictions are disagreeable and inconvenient, but cannot be evaded by such as are resolved to be obedient.

This larger rule, the need for separation, covers the question of marriage: An unbeliever is a part of the world and has little or no concern for the things of God. How can a true and sincere believer of the scripture, who is focused on that future inheritance in the kingdom of God, choose a partner, a wife or a husband who is not a believer? This is contrary to God's commands and is offensive to him. Such action constitutes disobedience to the commands for one who desires to do God's will and to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, and to honour and uphold his commandments.

Coming to definite indications on the subject, the mind of God has in all generations of mankind been expressed adversely to inter-marriage with unbelievers. Mention is made of such marriages before the flood. *"The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose."* The Flood swept away the result. When God afterwards chose a nation for Himself, the law He gave them was very specific on this point: *"Do not intermarry with them."* This was a moral matter. *"For they will turn your sons away from following me."* Israel disobeyed this law as they disobeyed the other laws. Judgment and captivity was the result. When they came back from Babylon, it was evident that they had gone astray in this matter, and made marriages with the people of the land. In connection with this we have the picture of Ezra casting himself down before God in an agony of shame, confessing their sin and imploring mercy. The severe remedy of pulling away the strange wives followed. We read Ezra 9v1 - 6 *"The people of Israel, including the priests and the Levites, have not kept themselves separate from the neighboring peoples with their detestable practices, They have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, and have mingled the holy race with the peoples around them. And the leaders and officials have led the way in this unfaithfulness." When I heard this, I tore my tunic and cloak, pulled hair from my head and beard and sat down appalled. Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel gathered around me because of this unfaithfulness of the exiles. And I sat there appalled until the evening sacrifice....I rose from my self-abasement, with my tunic and cloak torn, and fell on my knees with my hands spread out to the LORD my God and prayed:"* Ezra 10v2-3 *"Then Shecaniah son of Jehiel, one of the descendants of Elam, said to Ezra, "We have been unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women from the peoples around us."..... "Now let us make a covenant before our God to send away all these women and their children, in accordance with the counsel of my lord and of those who fear the commands of our God. Let it be done according to the Law."*

Coming on to ecclesial times, we have the same law of separation not to *"be yoked together with unbelievers."* If this applies to any kind of yoking, then it must apply to marriage which is so important to a man or woman. A man is more influenced by his wife than by any human being, and a wife by her husband. *"He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm."* – Proverbs 13v20. This applies to all degrees of association, but most powerfully of all to the closest - surely.

The Bible view of marriage is that they are *"one flesh."* How then could a brother or sister aiming to be holy to God, make themselves one flesh with an unbeliever? The apostolic command always

states a husband and wife as both *"belonging to the Lord."* Peter advises personal harmony *"so that nothing will hinder your prayers."* There could be no question of this sort if one of them were an unbeliever. He speaks of the relation of husbands to their wives, as being *"heirs with you of the gracious gift of life."*

It is stated by some as an objection that Paul in 1Corinthians 7 permits a brother or sister to remain with an unbelieving wife or husband. In truth, this permission bears the very opposite significance. It was in answer to a question on the subject, put to Paul by the Corinthians in writing (as the first verse shows). The question was; what is a man or woman who was married before becoming a believer, now found themselves in association with an unbelieving wife or husband? Now, had Paul's teaching allowed mixed marriages, how could such a question as this have arisen? The very fact that the Corinthians found it necessary to ask Paul's guidance in such circumstances, is a proof that they recognised that the right thing for believers was to be married to believers only. The answer is, they were to remain together if agreeable. But a husband or wife being dead, *"she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord."* (1Corinthians 7v39).

Common-sense and Scripture unite in pointing out the right line of action. Some reject Paul's judgment in the matter in that he had *"received no commandment"* on the subject, but spoke *"by permission,"* and gave his judgment as *"one who had received mercy of the Lord to be faithful."* A little reflection ought to save them from this mistake. Do they think the Lord would have *"permitted"* Paul to give a wrong judgment in the case? Paul refers to *"faithfulness"* as the inspiring motive of his advice: this shows that his judgment was something more than the expression of an opinion; it was the faithful exercise of a prerogative, the weight of which he seeks to bring to bear in the concluding remark, *"and I think that I too have the Spirit of God."* Here is a man who steps forward and says, *"I have the Spirit of God. God permits me, as a faithful man, to give this judgment on the matter you ask me about."* Is it possible that enlightenment fully awake could hesitate to submit implicitly to such a judgment? - R.R.

13.8.4 Divorce: Mark 10v11-12: *"He (Jesus) answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."* – 1Corinthians 7v11 v19; Romans 7v1-3.

13.8.5

Divorce and Remarriage (Study)

God HATES divorce - Malachi 2v16. It is the breaking of a covenant (v14). Yet God allowed it under the law of Moses because of the hardness of their hearts, as Jesus said in Matthew 19v8. But he pointed out that *"It was not this way from the beginning."* Following on from this, Jesus' own disciples asked him privately concerning this matter because they desired to fully understand these issues Mark 10v10. So Mark writes 10v2-10, *"When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this - v4 about divorce - which the Pharisees had put to Jesus testing him, - v2 "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife? What did Moses command you? he replied, They said, Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away - It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law", Jesus replied. But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female - For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one. ("the wife of your marriage covenant." Malachi 2v14) - v9 -Therefore what God has joined together; let man not separate."*

Jesus then explained **to his own disciples** - his law, which was his Father's law - for he was God's Son. v11 *"Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her."* v12 – *"And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, (not allowed under the Jewish law) she commits adultery."*

Now the disciples taught this in 1Corinthians 7v10-11 - *"To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain*

unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife." This is Christ's law to his own disciples - and being compassionate - like his heavenly Father, he permitted a separation - providing they remained unmarried otherwise they would be committing adultery. Shown in Mark 10v10.

Why then did Jesus say - in Matthew 5v32 "But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness (fornication), (permitted under the law of Moses) causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman (permitted under the law of Moses) commits adultery." Joseph the husband of Mary - Matthew 1v19 *"was a righteous man, (a Jew) and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly"* - because he thought she had committed fornication (sexual relations between unmarried persons). He was already engaged to be married to Mary and was allowed this under the law of Moses - Deuteronomy 24v1.

In Matthew chapter 5 Jesus was teaching the Jewish multitudes as well as his **own disciples who - being Jews were still under the law of Moses** - as was obvious from v 24 - also Matthew 8v1-4 confirms this - but in the house privately he did not mention the provision of the Law of Moses in Deut. 24v1. To his own disciples he raised the standard of behaviour to a higher position than the law of Moses and took them back to the beginning of creation. Matthew 5v28 *"But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."*

From then on - the Gospel was to be preached in all the world, not to Jews only - and that was why he said, *"If a woman divorces her husband (this was allowed under Gentile law) and be married to another, she commits adultery."* For Christ's disciples, Christians - divorce is not permissible.

13.8 Separate from wrong behaviour or doctrine: *"If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. - **"depart from such"**.* (From NIV but Young's Literal Translation adds the final words. 1Timothy 6v3-5; 2Thessalonians 3v6; v14 *"If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed."*; 2 John v8-11.

13.9.1

False Prophets

(Study)

We read in Luke 20v46-47 *"Beware of the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and love to be greeted in the market-places and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets. They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely."* Also Galatians 1v6-9 *"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel - which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the ONE we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!"* Well!!!

13.10 Not to take legal action against another person - 1Corinthians 6v1 and v7 . 13.10 *"If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church! I say this to shame*

you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? But instead, one brother goes to law against another--and this in front of unbelievers!"

"The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers."

"Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." 1Corinthians 6v1-11.

- 13.11 Take no Part in politics – Romans 13v1-3 *"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you."*

- 13.12 Not to join the armed forces - John 18v36 *"Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.";* 2Corinthians 10v3-5 *"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."*

13.12.1 **Fight for Christ and NOT for Man**
(Study)

2Corinthians 10v3-4. *"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds."*

CHRIST'S COMMANDS are in Matthew 5 v 39-45.

"But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also... You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.."

CHRIST'S ARMOUR - Romans 13v12 *"...So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light."*

2Cor. 6v7: *"... the weapons of righteousness..."*

Ephesians 6v11-17 *"Put on the **full armour of God** so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the **full armour of God**, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the **belt of truth** buckled round your waist, with the **breastplate***

of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

"I AM THE WAY" said Jesus, John 14v6 and he showed us that way - BY EXAMPLE.

He preached the Gospel - Matt. 9v35

He prayed for those who spitefully used him - Luke 23v34

He died for those who believe in him - John 3v15-17

He did not resist when arrested – John 18v8

Christ's words in Matthew 26v52 should convince us that to take the sword is wrong. *"All who draw the sword will die by the sword."*

As we saw from 2Corinthians 10v3-4 the warfare of this world is not for us - our warfare will be with Christ in the future - when he takes over the kingdoms of this world.

Psalms 2v6-12 - *"I have installed my King (God's king) on Zion, my holy hill.... V8 "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron sceptre; you will dash them to pieces like pottery."*

This also applied to Christ's brethren (those baptised into him - Galatians 3v27-29); Revelations 2v26-27 *"To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations -- 'He will rule them with an iron sceptre; he will dash them to pieces like pottery' -- just as I have received authority from my Father."*

13.12.2 Military Service.

13.12.3 Occupations unsuited to a True Brother or Sister of Christ (Study)

Christ clearly taught that his followers must not resist evil. We must not resort to force, nor are we permitted to avenge ourselves. We must, rather, submit to wrong and render good for evil. We must pray to God, through Jesus, always to help us. Consider carefully the following references:-

"Resist not evil"	-	Matthew 5v38-42
"Love your enemies"	-	Matthew 5v43-48
"Avenge not yourselves"	-	Romans 12v19-21
"Not to take the sword"	-	Matthew 26v51-52
	-	Luke 22v50-51
	-	John 18v10-11
"Not to go to law"	-	1Corinthians 6v1-8
"Not to take an oath"	-	Matthew 5v34-37
	-	James 5v12

Having looked at the references, we shall readily be able to appreciate how they control our actions regarding our relationship with the *'authorities that exist'*. Let us consider various aspects:-

- a) Military Service: This would necessitate our using the modern weapons of warfare and, if necessary, killing. In such service we would be forced to give unqualified obedience to the State whether such commands contravened the commands of Christ or not. We would also be part of the forces of this world and compromise our position of separation.

- b) Police Service: The above points apply to police service. A Police officer is under orders to enforce the law by any means.
- c) Security Officer - The above principals apply to a Security Officer. The Company for whom you would be working could insist that you keep their premises safe, even by using force if you had to.
- d) Going to Law: Following our baptism we follow the Law of Christ which forbid us to take legal action to redress wrongs committed against us. We have to suffer wrong for Jesus said *"do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."*
- e) Voting: In a democratic state everyone has a right to vote. We cannot exercise this right as we can take no part in the politics of the world. Such matters are overruled by God according to his purpose. Romans 13v1 *"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God."*
- f) Trade Unions: However worthy their original aims, Trade Unions are now largely political organisations and use methods to gain their ends which are completely inconsistent with our position in the Truth. As servants we have to submit and give good service without complaining. - Colossians 3v22-25; Ephesians 6v5-8; 1Timothy 6v1-2; 1Peter 2v18-20.

Although we do not take any part in the politics of the world, yet we have to be submissive and obedient to their demands and laws in so far as these laws do not conflict with the commands of Christ. We must at all times be model law-abiding citizens. We must be honest in all our dealings and pay such taxes as are laid upon us. This is clearly taught in the following references:- Matthew 22v15-22; Mark 12v13-17; Luke 20v20-26; Matthew 17v24-27; Romans 13v5-7; 1Peter 2v11-17

- 13.13 Honest to God. We must at all times be honest to God, brethren and sisters and everyone we speak to. Proverbs 30v7-9 *"Two things I ask of you, O LORD; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God."* Matthew 19v17-19 *"Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments." "Which ones?" the man inquired. Jesus replied, " 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself.'"; Luke 3v14 *"Don't extort money (obtain money by deceptive means) and don't accuse people falsely--be content with your pay."* If, before we were baptised we obtained money by dishonest ways, we must change our ways and live according to God and Christ's commandments.*

- 13.14 Fellowship Our fellowship with God and His dear Son is very precious. Our fellowship with each other is also very precious, like the Truth itself on which it is based.

It is hoped that the following notes will be helpful in our making a stand against any changes which compromise the Truth.

- a) Are we able scripturally to retain in fellowship those who, either - themselves do not accept our basis of fellowship or - are willing to fellowship those who do not accept our position?
- b) Can distance or local circumstances affect the answer?

OUR 'DAWN' FELLOWSHIP

Our fellowship with one another in the Truth is very precious; yet, like so many good things which we have, we almost certainly take it for granted. For example, it is good to be able to exchange visits between ecclesias and our brethren and sisters, and to be able to join together in fraternal meetings and other ecclesial and inter-ecclesial activities. These things we are able to do because, in spite of social and personality differences and incompatibilities, we have one underlying thing in common; we are fellows or partners together. We share the knowledge and hope of The Truth; we also try together to uphold its principles and guard against disunity and error. This precious heritage of fellowship would be lost if its basis were to be changed as some are advocating. Let us then consider, among other things, our basis of fellowship with one another; how we should maintain that fellowship in the light of what God has commanded and why we are separated from other communities of Christadelphians.

What is Fellowship?

It is the state of being fellows, partners or sharers; having things in common; the association with those with similar interests or aims. It also describes the bond between them. In the New Testament the original Greek word and its related words, have been variously rendered as "fellowship, common, communion, companion, communication, distribution, partaker, partner", all expressing the basic idea of sharing and association.

The fellowship of which the Scriptures speak is, primarily, the association, communion and partnership with God which He has graciously offered to men, and, secondarily, the communion between those who are in such fellowship with God. (1Corinthians 1v9; 1John 1v3, 7)

Fellowship between the saints was described by Bro. Roberts as "cordial and loving union, springing from oneness of mind in Divine things". These Divine things are the Light which God has graciously caused to shine in our hearts (2Corinthians 4v6). Receiving and walking in that Light brings fellowship with God the Father and His son Jesus Christ, and also fellowship one with another. (1John 1v5-7)

Fellowship is often thought of as having negative connotations but it is really a very positive thing which can help us in our probationary walk to the Kingdom. It is our association and partnership together with God Almighty as His sons and daughters because He has given us the Light of His Truth. It is an exclusive association, because by His Truth He has called us out of the world. In scriptural language it means walking with God, and walking together in the Light.

We can think of ourselves as being family partners - in partnership with God, His dear Son and with one another. We are part of His great enterprise of preparing us for the coming Day of perfect partnership and fellowship amidst the blessings of the immortal state. Our aim, therefore, must be to walk and work together now with one mind and purpose, "*so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought*" (1Corinthians 1v9-10), "*contending as one man for the faith of the gospel*". (Philippians 1v27).

Because the Truth, and the Fellowship based upon it, is so precious, we must do all we can to safeguard it, particularly in our own minds and hearts and in our daily walk, thereby helping our partners in the Truth to do the same. "*whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son*" - and is therefore in fellowship with them. (2 John 9).

This is the positive aspect of fellowship. There is, of course, a negative side, for John also says "*Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God*" - and cannot therefore have fellowship with Him, nor be in fellowship with those who do believe in Christ's doctrine.

Concerning those who did depart from the doctrine of Christ, the apostle's command was to not receive them:- *"If anyone comes to you (as a teacher?) and does not bring this teaching (Christ's teaching), do not take him into your house or welcome him (ie greet him and wish him well). Anyone who welcomes him (in fellowship with) shares in his wicked work."* (2John 10,11). To receive and greet one who brought in false teaching (not according to the Light given by God) was to imply that his false doctrine was of no consequence. It would rather encourage him and others, allowing the error to spread. Those encouraging him by tolerating his teaching would therefore be in fellowship with his evil deeds. Consistent with this is Christ's own rebuke, in the Revelation, to certain ecclesias for retaining errors in their midst. (Revelation 2)

Here then is a basic principle governing our attitude to others who advocate different doctrines and practices. It must be as valid now as then because the Truth, which expresses God's mind, does not change.

The Basis of our Fellowship

What constitutes the Light to which we have referred? The simple answer is **"The Truth"**; but because we are talking about the basis of our fellowship together we need to be more precise, otherwise there is room for misunderstanding and uncertainty. For this purpose, the booklet entitled "A Statement of the One Faith, forming the Christadelphian Basis of Fellowship", defines the essential elements of our Faith in matters of doctrine and practice. It is a summary of our understanding of God's light on those fundamental truths which bind us together.

Our Statement of Faith is **not** the same as that of the other Christadelphian bodies. It includes

- (a) our understanding of New Testament commands regarding going to law, divorce and remarriage, and
- (b) the doctrine regarding fellowship (explained for example by the apostle John as already quoted), that we cannot fellowship those who practice, teach or condone things contrary to Christ's doctrine which the Statement of Faith defines.

Our fellowship is firmly based on this common understanding of God's Truth and its obligations.

The Nature of Fellowship

Now the nature of the fellowship we have with God is obviously different from that which we have with each other. The communion which we are able to have with God is an individual personal communion of an enlightened heart and mind; and the state of that heart and mind is known only to God and determines the state of fellowship with Him. In contrast, our fellowship with one another can only be based on the outward profession and behaviour of each brother and sister showing that we uphold the same things and the same standards and hence wish to associate together.

Doctrine into Fellowship

When we were baptised we began our fellowship with the Father. Soon after, the ecclesia welcomed us and extended its fellowship and that of all brothers and sisters who believe the same things. As a result we enjoy the communion and partnership of being of one mind in true fellowship with our fellow believers.

When **we welcome** a newly baptised brother or sister and "receive them into fellowship" it is important to remember that by that public act we are not receiving that person into fellowship **with God**. That has already taken place in the act of baptism.

When we welcome and "receive into **our** fellowship" a brother or sister, we do so recognising that there are other Christadelphian communities or "fellowships". By our act of "receiving into our

fellowship” we are publicly declaring that the brother or sister concerned has become a fellow-partner with us, because we share a common basis of faith on which we will henceforth associate.

This basis should have been explained and agreed to at the instruction and interview preceding baptism.

Breaking of Fellowship

If a brother or sister, after a lapse of time, is no longer in harmony with the basis on which our fellowship depends and makes this known either by word or behaviour, he or she is straining, and ultimately breaking, the bond of unity (the fellowship) with all other brethren and sisters. Should this situation of disharmony persist after patient efforts towards trying to win our brother or sister back, have been exhausted, the ecclesia would be obliged, as a last resort, to declare publicly to all those in our fellowship its dissociation from the brother or sister concerned, and so reverse the action taken at the “receiving in” to fellowship.

Withdrawal of Fellowship

This point of last resort is the occasion when we collectively, as members of an ecclesia, recognise and declare to the whole body of believers that the bond which previously existed between us and the brother or sister concerned has sadly been broken. Withdrawal should not be “excommunication”, but is a sorrowful acknowledgement that that brother or sister is no longer “with” us. It is our communal way of applying the scriptural command to “withdraw yourselves”.

Do we then by that act withdraw their fellowship with God? - No; definitely not! Nothing we say or do in this matter of withdrawal from a brother or sister must be construed as withdrawing, or even breaking, the individual’s own fellowship with God. That will always remain from the day of baptism a personal matter between the individual and the Creator. We cannot know the extent, or the timing, of any breakdown in that fellowship, nor of any possible intermediate healing. None of us can presume to pronounce another to be out of fellowship with God.

What we can and do say is that by the outward evidence known to us, such an one is clearly not of the same mind as us and is therefore not in fellowship with us in our understanding of what constitutes fellowship with God. So ecclesially we stand aside, and pray for an eventual resumption of the partnership we previously had together.

Furthermore because an individual ecclesia is only part of the whole body of believers what we do in this matter of receiving into and withdrawal of our fellowship is done on behalf of the body as a whole.

Ecclesial Fellowship

Although the Ecclesial Body is made up of separate ecclesias we must not think of our **fellowship** being fragmented. Geographical location, as well as numerical strengths of individual ecclesias are of no account in the matter of ecclesial fellowship. It cannot be limited or changed by distance, or location, or local circumstances. Our fellowship is made up of the body of believers throughout the world who are in fellowship with one another because they all are of one mind regarding the foundation.

For one ecclesia to accept into fellowship a person who has scripturally and properly been rejected by another ecclesia, or had another ecclesia’s fellowship withdrawn, must prevent fellowship between these two ecclesias because there is not unity. Those who accept that person into their ecclesia are accepting or condoning the offence involved. They thus have fellowship with the “evil deed” (2John v11), because they have associated themselves with the offender.

Some sections of Christadelphians, however, are unwilling to accept the need for world-wide unanimity among ecclesias on all essential matters of doctrine and practice.

We cannot fellowship those who are not willing to act against, and who tolerate (i.e. fellowship) those who the Scripture teaches are in error, and from whom, in some cases, we ourselves have previously withdrawn. Neither can we fellowship the introduction of ideas which nullify the very Gospel which we preach ecclesially and individually. The clear evidence that such things **are** effectively tolerated under the Christadelphian 'Central' community system of Ecclesial Autonomy, can be adduced from the writings of those who are, or have been, closely involved. (See Appendix).

Ecclesial Autonomy

Ecclesial Autonomy is good and right when matters solely within an individual ecclesia's jurisdiction are involved, but it must not be allowed to extend to fundamental matters affecting fellowship which are the concern of the whole community. It is the practice in the Christadelphian 'Central' community to allow **all** matters, including matters involving fellowship between the brethren and sisters and between ecclesias, to be the sole responsibility of the individual ecclesia concerned.

If that ecclesia chooses not to take action, even if other ecclesias condemned the offence in question, nothing is done, because of the autonomy rule. Hence the offence remains: the leaven is not purged out and continues to permeate. This of course makes a mockery of the Scriptural concept of one mind and one body in Christ, if different standards on vital matters are adopted in neighbouring ecclesias who claim fellowship together.

If a brother or sister in the Christadelphian 'Central' community wanted a divorce all he or she would have to do is find an ecclesia in Central which allowed it. He or she could then be divorced and even remarry, and still be in fellowship with those in other ecclesias who proclaim they do not believe in divorce and remarriage.

The future prospects for God's Truth under such a system of "fellowship" must be poor indeed. Acceptance by the 'Central' community of the doctrine of ecclesial autonomy, and the errors it conceals, suggests it is well-nigh impossible to halt the present decline in doctrine and practice. It is significant that this problem has again been brought to light in issues of The Christadelphian magazine.

We should continue to encourage those in the 'Central' community who are dismayed at the situation to apply the scriptural remedy in their own cases and withdraw themselves. Those who formed the "Old Paths" fellowship in 1957 did so; and that action of itself provides a sufficient testimony to the situation. They themselves have publicly testified to the apostacy which Central's unscriptural concept of fellowship has permitted to exist and persist.

Over the years various attempts have been made to persuade those in the 'Central' community to make a stand on matters which they, like us, find unacceptable. It is a matter of great sadness that, with few exceptions, they have so far not been prepared to give practical and scriptural effect to their concern at the disunity which exists. Rather it will continue to be necessary for them, as individuals, to choose at which ecclesias, other than their own, they will feel able and willing to share (have fellowship in) the breaking of bread. Instead they ought to feel free to break bread with any and all in their community, as we are able to do because we are of one mind.

We may thus be assured that the scriptural doctrine of a united fellowship - walking together only with those of like mind - is the path we should continue to follow. It is scriptural and it is logical. To abandon this and say in effect that to have a united fellowship does not really matter, and that we can be in fellowship with those who disagree with us and from whom for sound scriptural reasons we have for so long been separated, is to ignore God's mind expressed in the scriptures and opt out of the responsibility placed upon us to defend the Truth committed to us.

Appendix

A LEGACY FROM THE PAST

There are some who say, 'What has happened in the past is not relevant to the situation today'. This is in fact not so. The present divided brotherhood stems from a willingness in the past to tolerate errors of doctrine and practice for the sake of union. These errors over the years have acted as leaven to divide the brotherhood still further in both belief and practice.

The 'Central' community was formed in 1957 with the reunion of three groups of Christadelphians not in fellowship with Dawn. In addition to the fact that none of the three groups took a stand on divorce and remarriage, they fellowshipped those who held other errors. In summary, these groups were as follows:

- 1 **Suffolk Street:** formed by those who held that it was not necessary to accept that all Scripture is the inspired word of God. This group included those who maintained that only those who have been baptised will be raised to judgment (the 'Resurrectional Responsibility' question).
- 2 **The Shield Group** (a part of the Suffolk Street Group): included in fellowship those who held what is known as the 'Clean Flesh' heresy which maintained that Christ did not share our nature.
- 3 **Temperance Hall:** included in fellowship those teaching errors concerning military and police service.

A number of early attempts to unite these groups failed because a common doctrinal basis could not be found. One such move in 1940 was abandoned when Temperance Hall, the stricter group, correctly insisted that every individual brother and sister unreservedly accepted the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith (BASF). By 1957 however, the Temperance Hall position had changed, to the extent that:

- 1 The BASF, acceptance of which they had previously insisted upon, was effectively weakened, by the issue of two formal letters, to accommodate those in Suffolk Street who could not accept the BASF with regard to 'Resurrectional Responsibility'.
- 2 The 'Clean Flesh' error was accommodated by substituting an addendum for those clauses in the BASF defining the nature of man and Jesus and the effect of his sacrifice. This document omits features of the original clauses.
- 3 Reunion was accepted after a ballot. A majority vote in each ecclesia, rather than individual acceptance, was considered sufficient, thus **allowing the dissenting minority to be received into fellowship.**

Thus, at reunion, the Temperance Hall basis of fellowship was changed to accommodate error. A dissenting minority of brethren and sisters in that fellowship withdrew and formed the Old Paths fellowship. Some of these brethren and sisters have since realised they are in fact at one with the Dawn fellowship on all matters, including our position on divorce and remarriage, have withdrawn from the Old Paths fellowship and have joined us.

Further evidence of the unsatisfactory nature of the basis of the 'Central' community may be seen from the fact that certain ecclesias deny fellowship to the members of other ecclesias within the same fellowship. From the above, it will be clear that we could not join in fellowship with the 'Central' community on at least the following grounds:

- 1 The doctrinal basis on which fellowship is extended has been undermined.
- 2 The Central community is willing to retain in fellowship those who do not in fact accept the BASF, and therefore they tolerate serious errors.
- 3 Divorce and remarriage is permitted in many ecclesias.

The climate of toleration and compromise thus established nearly 40 years ago bears fruit today, and is seen in the promulgation of 'new thinking' on Bible doctrine, more recent examples of which include denial of the creation account in Genesis. There is an evident inability to deal with errors which is made more serious by the 'ecclesial autonomy' rule. Not only has the incorrect basis of fellowship in 'Central' allowed retention of the earlier errors, other problems have gained considerable ground with the result that the current list of serious errors is formidable as summarised below:

In 1988 an Appeal Committee of 24 Brethren from 6 Central community ecclesias identified the following false ideas being aired within their fellowship:-

- 1) That parts of the Bible are not inspired
- 2) That the Gospel is confined to the saving work of Jesus
- 3) That belief in 'The Trinity' does not affect salvation
- 4) That belief in an immortal Soul is permissible
- 5) That it is alright to believe in a supernatural Devil
- 6) That the faithful will rise immortal
- 7) That the Kingdom of God is within you and is the Church
- 8) That Israel are no longer God's chosen people
- 9) That the Holy Spirit is available today as a power in the heart and mind
- 10) That fellowship with other denominations is both permissible and desirable

Those responsible for promulgating such ideas are still in fellowship.

In 1994 the February and April 'Testimony' and the April 'Christadelphian' have highlighted, through Editorials, the following problems within the Central Community today:-

- a) **There is a movement to produce a new abbreviated statement of faith** because the BASF is too restrictive and complicated.
The New Statement of Faith would deal with, the Nature of God, the Nature of Man, the Return of Christ to reign on the earth and Baptism of Believers.
It would omit the important doctrines of the Nature of Christ and what was achieved by his sacrifice, and the inspiration of the Scriptures as the only source of knowledge about God.
- b) As a consequence of (a) above, there is a **denial of the distinctiveness of the Christadelphian Faith and that we have the Truth**, urging as a result greater co-operation with other Christian denominations.
- c) It is considered that there should be **an open Fellowship with those of other groups of professing Christians** based on tolerance of their beliefs and practices.
- d) **Paid ministers** - A new movement to set up an organisation within Central to pay salaries to Brethren who minister to Ecclesias.
- e) **The Endeavour Movement** - A magazine propounding clear doctrinal error is still being published within Central and its adherents are tolerated in fellowship.

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13.15 **At the resurrection** - what will be our nature? Will only those who have put on the name of Christ in baptism be raised from the dead? 1Corinthians 15v51 *"Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep (in death - for some will be alive when Christ comes), but we will all (both the living and the dead that have been raised - the responsible ones) be changed--"* That is - after judgment as it shows in Hebrews 9v27 - because the unrighteous will NOT be changed to immortality - they will stay in their mortal death-stricken state and die the second death - Revelations 20v6. In 1Corinthians 15 the apostle Paul is speaking only of the righteous ones who are responsible which are raised from the dead. Romans 14v10 says, *"But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."*

Daniel 12v2 *"at that time your people--everyone whose name is found written in the book--will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, (those who have followed God's commands) others to shame and everlasting contempt (those who have not followed God's commands)."* 2 Corinthians 5v10 *"For we must all (responsible) appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due to him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."* At this stage we all will be mortal. John 5v25-28 - *"I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all (the responsible ones - whether they have been baptised or not -but have the knowledge of the True Gospel) who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out--those who have done good (obeyed God's commands) will rise to live, and those who have done evil (the responsible ones) will rise to be condemned."*

So - those who stand before the judgment seat of Christ MUST be human/mortal, otherwise they cannot be judged worthy of eternal life - or death. We can also see that those who will be raised from the dead (or if they are still living when Christ returns) are those who are responsible - those who have the knowledge of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, whether they are baptised or not. Those who have not been baptised have not carried out the command as we see in Mark 16v16 *"Whoever believes and is baptised WILL be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."*

13.16 **"Christadelphian" means "Brother (or sister) of Christ".**

**Questions**

- 294 Do the Scriptures say that certain men and women are chosen by God?
- 295 Is it necessary to be baptised?
- a) ☐ yes, after knowledge of God's Word
  - b) ☐ no, I have been baptised before
  - c) ☐ yes, when I feel the need to
- 296 What does repentance mean?
- 297 Is there any point in baptising a person who has no knowledge of the Truth?
- 298 What is baptism and what does it symbolise?
- 299 Is baptismal sprinkling sufficient?
- a) ☐ yes
  - b) ☐ no – I have to be baptised in plenty of water
  - c) ☐ there is no need for any other baptism
- 300 At baptism your past life is buried and your sins washed away. Does this mean that you will never sin again?
- 301 How do we obtain forgiveness of our sins?
- a) ☐ by prayer to God through Jesus
  - b) ☐ by crossing our hearts when we sin
  - c) ☐ by my beads
- 302 After baptism we commence a new life. Who is our pattern?
- 303 In what way is Christ our pattern?
- 304 What is the first commandment?
- a) ☐ love the brethren and sisters
  - b) ☐ love your neighbour as yourself
  - c) ☐ love the Lord your God
- 305 What is the second commandment?
- 306 What additional commands have we? Name four.
- 307 Why should we Break Bread on Sunday each week?
- 308 Was the blood Christ shed for the forgiveness of our sins?
- 309 What does the word "saint" mean?
- 310 Should a brother or sister be caught up in the world's affairs, ie pleasures, politics, war, police force, suing at law?
- 311 Do you think it right to court or marry anyone who does not obey the commandments of Christ?
- a) ☐ yes - if they are Christian
  - b) ☐ no – we are to keep separate from the world
  - c) ☐ no – we are not to marry if they are not true believers



- 312 Are we commanded to withdraw from those who will not live lives in accordance with Scriptural teaching?
- 313 Is divorce permissible?
- a) ☐ it is not allowed for any reason
  - b) ☐ it is allowed if both agree
  - c) ☐ it is allowed for adultery
- 314 Do you believe the Bible is wholly inspired?
- 315 Do you believe that knowledge of the Scriptures brings responsibility?
- 316 Do you believe that Christ was tempted as we are and was capable of sinning?
- a) ☐ no – it is not possible that Christ could sin
  - b) ☐ yes – because he had sinful human nature, like ours
  - c) ☐ no – because he was God's Son
- 317 Do you believe that those who are raised from the dead are still mortal/human?
- 318 What does the word "Christadelphian" mean?
- 319 What is the Kingdom of God and where will it be?
- 320 Do you wish to be baptised and be a brother/sister of Christ?