

## AN EXAMINATION OF PHILIP MAURO'S TRACT ON CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

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**I**N a small pamphlet entitled, "Concerning Fellowship in Breaking Bread," by Mr. Mauro, we are invited to give special attention to the two following points, as stated by himself:

"*First*, The proposition that the breaking of bread is an *act*, or *event*, each occurrence of which is complete in itself, so that there cannot be such a thing as 'setting up the Lord's table in any place,' nor among any particular group or association of believers. *Second*, The true interpretation and application of 2 Tim. 2 : 20-22."

Having read his paper with patient care, I can say with assurance that his first proposition is flatly<sup>a</sup> contradicted in the Scriptures, and that his interpretation and application of 2 Tim. 2 : 20-22 is a serious perversion<sup>b</sup> of it, evacuating<sup>c</sup> it of its meaning and sanctifying power.

I purpose<sup>d</sup> an examination<sup>e</sup> of these two points by the infallible<sup>f</sup> word of God, to show what is its verdict<sup>g</sup> on them. But I have some remarks of

a more general character which I desire to make first.

Mr. M. is a vigorous writer, and were he more mature in the mind of God would be helpful to the Lord's people. But not only this tract, but most of his writings which have come to my notice, are marred by ill-digested<sup>2</sup> thoughts and extreme statements which the Scriptures do not support, and which in some cases quite nullify the words of God. This renders him unsafe as a guide and leader to the people of God.

While carefully reading the above mentioned paper I have been much impressed with this characteristic. Many statements in it could not emanate<sup>3</sup> from a mind formed by the Holy Scriptures as to the fundamental character of the house of God, and the responsibility of the Lord's servants to maintain, carry on, and preserve that fundamental character. In result there frequently is an *unfair* characterizing of the thoughts and views of others, which he opposes. It is unjust to attribute<sup>4</sup> to another what he does not hold. Mr. M. is guilty of this. Undoubtedly it is not malice,<sup>5</sup> but, as I have suggested, the result of haste to publish without adequate<sup>6</sup> spiritual knowledge.

Another matter is more difficult to associate with immaturity,<sup>7</sup> though a mind matured in the truth would not fall into it. I refer to the actual insertion at times, in Mr. Mauro's treatment of a passage of Scripture, what is *not in* the passage. This is very serious, and springs, I believe, from the power of a wrong principle imbibed.<sup>8</sup> This so blinds the mind that the evident force and meaning of the

passage is denied. It then becomes necessary to find and adopt an explanation which will reconcile the passage to the wrong principle already accepted.

Convinced of these things, and that some of them, at least, seem to be characteristic of Mr. M. as a writer, it has become to me a duty to call the attention of God's people to them, as far as I am able to reach them, especially as there appears to be evidence of efforts being made to give his writings a widespread circulation. It is with a desire to be faithful to the Lord that I warn His people of the necessity of special care and discrimination<sup>2</sup> in reading Mr. M.'s writings.

Scripture shows that there are several classes of persons that should be debarred,<sup>2</sup> not only from collective fellowship in the breaking of bread, but from *all* Christian fellowship. In one class only is there exception, as I shall point out further on.

1. All unbelievers (2 Cor. 6: 14-18). No yoke (nothing that binds people together) is to exist between believers and unbelievers.

2. All professing believers who are unsound as to the doctrine of the person of Christ (2 John 10, 11). "Receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed. For he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds." The language is sufficiently plain and forceful. Even a Christian woman is to refuse private or individual Christian fellowship to a person who is unsound as to the person of Christ; and if private fellowship is to be denied to such, surely the collective as well. Unitarians and all others who deny the deity of the Man Jesus Christ are barred out. It also excludes those who,

whether they deny His deity or not, deny His true humanity.

3. Those who are fundamentally unsound as to the nature and necessity of the sacrificial death of Christ. Among many passages showing this, is John 6:53. It is decisive. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have *no* life in you." Another is John 12:24: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." Apart from that one only atoning death there is no salvation. All Christian fellowship is based on the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ. He who denies the foundation on which Christian fellowship rests is disqualified for participating in it.

I presume there are few who are sound as to the person of Christ that are unsound as to the nature and necessity of His death. Those who are so, probably give only a passive, and not an active, acceptance to the truth of His person. In view of this fact, this and the previous class might well be put together, as indeed is generally done.

4. Those who in their individual life and walk compromise holiness. One passage showing this will suffice. It is 1 Cor. 5:11: "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no not to eat." Here is plainly an authoritative ruling by which we are made responsible to refuse all Christian fellowship to those who live in unholiness.

5. Those who maintain unholy associations. There

are many passages which show this. I cite two: 1 Cor. 10 : 14-33, which is very explicit. We shall return to it later on. The other is, 2 Tim. 2 : 19-22; a passage which, rightly understood, is very strong. Great efforts have been put forth to break down the evident and plain meaning of this latter passage, but without success, as we shall see.

Mr. M. very evidently agrees that all persons belonging to the first four classes named are disqualified for Christian fellowship; but he disagrees as to the last. He reasons very vigorously against debarring persons who are merely in unholy associations. His reasoning is very special pleading, antagonistic to the evident mind of the Spirit, and a complete nullification of the passage he fights, destroying its sanctifying power.

I desire here to make it perfectly clear what is in contention. I do not insist, and I know of none who do, that all private fellowship is to be withdrawn from all who belong to this last class. I judge that there are many circumstances in which having Christian fellowship *individually*, or *privately*, with many whose associations are unscriptural is quite permissible. I have found nothing in the Scriptures against it. But *collective* or *assembly* fellowship is certainly prohibited. We shall consider it in our examination.

Here I only insist that a mind divinely taught as to Christian fellowship, thoroughly imbued with the conception of its nature and character, as set forth in the word of God, would not only accept that persons belonging to the first four classes are debarred from the privileges of such fellowship, but would agree as well to the authoritative ruling by the apos-

tle which excludes from it also, at least in its collective form, persons of the fifth class, i. e., persons in unholy associations.

Mr. M.'s tract not only denies this holy safeguard given us as a protection for the normal character of Christian assembly fellowship, but he in fact denies the fundamental character and nature of the fellowship itself. This we will see as we proceed.

Mr. M. admits that the principle of separation from evil is right. But it seems to be only a "theory" with him, for he complains that "in actual practice" it does not operate aright. In essence this is infidelity. If a principle is true, it is right to practice it, whatever be the difficulties and cost. But in his examination of its practice Mr. M. is unfair. He does not speak of inconsistency in the practice of a right principle. If he did, one would readily admit there has been much of it. There does not appear to be the slightest evidence that he looks on the failures in the practice as being through Satan's attacks on the principle itself, or on the weakness of those holding the principle in making practical application of it. Had he seen this, he would not have unfairly and falsely characterized the practice, as he has done.

I might say much more in this line; but as it is only the truth of God which delivers from error, we now turn to this.

I have quoted from Mr. M's pamphlet the two points to which he calls our special attention. We will now look at his first: "THE PLACE WHICH THE BREAKING OF BREAD HAS IN CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP."

We will look at it first, as conceived by Mr. Mauro.

He says :

“The breaking of bread is an *act* or *event*, each occurrence of which is complete in itself” (p. 4).

Also,

“A proper *meeting* or *gathering* is constituted wherever *two or more* of these called ones assemble to the name of the Lord Jesus. Every *meeting* is thus distinct from every other, both as to time and place” (p. 8).

Then he counsels us, on page 13,

“To cease regarding the Lord’s table as a continuing *institution*, and to treat it, as it should be treated, as a memorial *act*, to be observed from time to time (‘As often as ye *do* this’), by those members of His body who are gathered in one place at the time. Every observance should be regarded as a *distinct event*, complete in itself, and disconnected from like observances at other times and in other places ; and the question of participation in it should depend upon the spiritual state at the time of those who are present. If it had been remembered that the breaking of bread is an *event*, or memorial *act*, and not a continuing institution, we should never have heard such expressions as, ‘Setting up another table,’ etc.”

“The breaking of bread in remembrance of the Lord is, at each occurrence, an *isolated event*, complete in itself” (p. 21).

These quotations will suffice to give us a clear conception of Mr. M.’s idea as to the place the breaking of bread has in Christian fellowship. In connection with this is his idea also of a properly

constituted meeting. Answering a correspondent he says:

“In this connection you say, however, that the breaking of bread in apostolic days was the practice of a *company* which existed as such all through the week; I must dissent from this, and would point out that the *only company*, which existed (has an existence) as such during the week is the entire company of the members of Christ’s body on earth, and that those who may come together on the first day, or at any other time, constitute simply a *meeting* or *gathering* which derives its character as a *Christian* meeting solely from *the presence of the Lord in the midst*. It follows that such a meeting has no other or better status, authority, or sanction, than any and every other meeting—however small the numbers—at which the Lord Himself is present” (p. 17).

I do not need to quote more. It is evident to one who understands the fundamental constitution of the house of God, as set up by the apostle Paul, that Mr. M.’s reasoning mind has missed it. It is the *believing* mind which God teaches. Mr. M.’s conception of a properly constituted meeting is a denial both of the outward order and the internal arrangement of the house of God as Paul established them. It is a complete subversion of the relations of the assemblies to one another, as ordained by Paul. It is an entire denial of the place the breaking of bread has in Christian fellowship, according to the instruction of the apostle.

An examination of the teaching of Paul on these matters will make all this clear. A passage, quoted indeed by Mr. M., but not understood by him, has



an important bearing on these points: "God is faithful by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1: 9).

We hear it sometimes crudely and unintelligently remarked, "I know no other fellowship but that of 1 John 1: 3, the fellowship that is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ." Now, *this* fellowship is a participation in the nature and life of the Father and the Son. Every one born of God, necessarily by that fact, is a sharer in that nature and life. Of course the flow of it may be hindered in many ways and from many causes, but of this the passage is not speaking. Every one who is *in* the light, however feebly that light may be *in him*, shares in the nature and life of the Father and the Son. It is common to all who are born of Him. But Paul is not speaking of *this* in 1 Cor. 1: 9. He is speaking here of a fellowship which has been set up *on earth*, which elsewhere he calls "the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth"—the truth of the great mystery of the person of the Christ (1 Tim. 3: 15, 16). It is a fellowship set up to be the proclamation among men of the truth of Jesus Christ, and the upholder, the maintenance, of it. This is the fundamental character of the house of God. It is its fundamental character everywhere. Paul constituted the local assemblies alike in every place, depositing everywhere the same teaching, or doctrine, (1 Cor. 4: 17), ordaining the same customs (chap. 7: 17; 11: 16). He gave to the assemblies everywhere the same external order and the same internal arrangement.

He had divine authority for this, for an adminis-

tration (Eph. 3 : 2) was given to him. He was authorized to be the architect (1 Cor. 3 : 10) of the house of God, to establish the pattern according to which the house of God was to be carried on and maintained. He was thus the authorized establisher of the fellowship of God's Son.

It is of this fellowship, the pattern of which was committed to and executed by the apostle Paul under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, I wish to make a few remarks, which I believe will prove helpful.

*First* : If we are in this fellowship, it is of *grace*. God hath called us unto it. *Second* : It is a fellowship of which God's Son is the *Source*. He is the establisher of it—the One who conferred on Paul the authority to set it up on earth—to build it. *Third* : As being the source of it, its establisher, He gives *character* to it. He not only participates in it, but He has originated it and given it its character. *Fourth* : This fellowship is an *abiding*, continuous fellowship, not intermitting—a continuously subsisting fellowship. It is not an occasional, but an abiding reality. *Fifth* : The Spirit of God continuously maintains it. He has never, during all the ages succeeding the apostolic, departed from the pattern He then set up through the apostle. *Sixth* : It is our responsibility to abide by the pattern the Holy Spirit *then* gave us.

Now, of course, we can understand that the fellowship of God's Son once set up here on earth should be the object of assault. Indeed, the first epistle to the Corinthians shows us the chief ways in which it is assailed, and which are to be refused :

In 1 Cor. 2 : 14-16 he exposes and expels *worldly*

*wisdom*—the mere natural man. In chap. 3: 16, 17 it is the *destroyers*—those fundamentally unsound. In chap. 5: 11 it is *lust*—self-indulgence—which assails, and is refused; and in chap. 10: 14-33 *it is those in unholy associations*. These are divine safeguards which we cannot neglect if we purpose to preserve the apostolic and fundamental character of the fellowship unto which by the grace of God we have been called.

We have seen that this fellowship is a continuously abiding fellowship. Our present purpose is to ascertain the place the breaking of bread has in it. It is most surely a feature—a prominent one—of the fellowship. What relations, then, has the breaking of bread with this continuously subsisting fellowship—what is its connection with the fellowship of God's Son? Does the word of God answer? It does; and its answer is not in the least equivocal. It makes it plain that the breaking of bread is the very central feature of the fellowship God's Son has established here upon earth.

That fellowship is founded on, and centers in, the death of Christ. Our blessing the cup and breaking the bread is the expression of that death which is the basis of the fellowship. The cup, containing the poured out wine, is the symbol of the poured out blood of Christ, and the loaf symbolizes the dead body of Christ. Our partaking of the cup and loaf expresses our identification with that death—the death that is the foundation on which the fellowship in which we participate depends (1 Cor. 10: 16-17).

Now the apostles and the saints of their days, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, met together

every first day of the week for the purpose of breaking bread (Acts 20: 7). Their custom is our rule. Each first day of the week we repeat the announcing the death (1 Cor. 11: 26) of the Lord. But every announcement of the death of the Lord is the expression of our identification *with that* death, and that we are partakers of a fellowship of which *that* death is the basis.

We have seen this fellowship is a continuing fellowship. It is not merely for the first day of the week. It is not merely for the time we are met together for the purpose of breaking bread. It is not in that way an intermitting fellowship. The fellowship is an established, continuously-subsisting fellowship, and the breaking of bread has a place that makes it the very centre of it. It is its characteristic feature.

Surely, then, looking at the breaking of bread in the light of 1 Cor. 10: 16, 17, it is impossible to regard it as an "act or event, each occurrence of which is complete in itself." It is not an "isolated event" or "meeting," to be regarded as "distinct from every other, both as to time and place."

But 1 Cor. 10 has still more to say to us on this point. I wish here to remind my readers that the apostle is speaking as the mouth-piece of God, as the exponent and interpreter of the mind of God. He is authoritatively giving what the will of God is. Well, then, he says: "I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils" (vers. 20, 21). He is speaking here, evidently,

as verse 19 indicates, of the liberty some of them boasted they had to eat meat in an idol's temple (see chap. 8: 9, 10). He does not deal with this matter here in chap. 10 as he deals with it in chap. 8. There he appeals to the effect it might have on a weak brother whose conscience still regarded the idol to be something. If he was emboldened to go in the idol's temple and eat meat sacrificed to it by the example of one who went in and partook on the ground of knowing the idol was nothing, it would mean for him a defiled conscience. The apostle denounces the use of this boasted liberty as inconsiderate destruction of conscience in the weak brother; as sinning against him, and thus sinning against Christ.

In chapter 10 the apostle looks at this matter from another standpoint. The act of eating the meat is the expression of identification with the fellowship of the idol, or the demon it represents. Such an act is in violation of the fellowship of God's Son. The one doing it would be regarded by all observers of it as connected with the fellowship of which the idol was the centre. Now the fellowship of idols, or demons, is antagonistic in nature and character from the fellowship of God's Son. It follows therefore that eating meat in the temple of an idol on Monday is not merely inconsistent with breaking bread on the Lord's Day, but a denial of what the act of breaking bread on the Lord's Day is the expression of. If on the Lord's Day we are identified with the fellowship of God's Son, we are identified with it on Monday—on every day of the week. The fellowship of the breaking of bread is an expression of what does not end with that act or event. There is a very real and true

sense in which the Christian is at the table of the Lord all the time—not only on the first day of the week, but all the days of the week. His daily, hourly life is inevitably linked with it.

To this point I may return again, but must now pass on to another. We have seen that the apostle insists on the principle that breaking bread expresses identification, continuous identification with a fellowship that is founded on the death of Christ. We have also seen how he applies the principle in reference to the fellowship of an idol. His application of the principle in this case is an illustration and example for us.

We are not surrounded with temples of idols, nor therefore with tables of devils. It will not do for us to say, however, we have no occasion for applying the principle revealed. Such occasions, alas, are but too common, and it is disloyalty to Christ who died for us, and a violation of the nature and character of the fellowship of which *that* death is the basis, if we are identified with what vitiates it.

While saying before that the Christian is always connected with the fellowship of which the breaking of bread is a central and characterizing feature, it does not follow that in existing conditions *all* Christians are to be allowed the privileges of it. We have noticed before those to whom it is denied. In 1 Cor. 5, the man to whom it is denied is owned a true Christian; and here in chap. 10 there is no question raised as to their reality. They even claim liberty on the plea of their strong faith, and they are denied the privileges of the fellowship with which they are connected *as* being Christians.

None denies the apostle as being the exponent and interpreter of the will of God ; his ruling is authoritative therefore. Those who are loyal to his legislation will be governed by it. If with him association and identification with the fellowship of a demon disqualified a Christian for the enjoyment of his privileges with his fellow-Christians, those who are subject to the apostle's authoritative ruling in the matter will observe the practice which he has thus directed to be followed by the Lord's people. Mr. Mauro resists it.

Much beside, in his paper, under expressions attractive to such as care little for the claims of Christ, yet are loud enough for their own, is but the boldest independency. Paul certainly regarded the gathering at Corinth as in relations with others in other places who "call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1 : 2). Mr. Mauro does not. His principles admitted by a meeting of Christians would forbid considering it a Christian *meeting*, or a company gathered to the Lord's name. They who profess to be gathered to the Lord's name should be subject to the Lord's order, as Wesleyans should be subject to Wesley's.

We may ask here, How does the house of God assemble? It certainly does not assemble as a universal house. There are many insuperable difficulties in the way of the universal house coming together at one time in one place. It should be manifest that the whole house assembles *locally*. The local gathering is the assembling of the house in the locality. The local gathering then is the representative of the universal house. To be that,

however, the local gathering must be fundamentally the same everywhere. Again, the house of God is *one*. There are not *many* houses of God, but *one* house. Here again we see a reason why the local assembly is the representative of the universal assembly. We may say also it is the representative in *its* locality of all the assemblies everywhere, but this necessitates the assemblies having everywhere the same fundamental character. But all this shows how close and intimate are the relations of the assemblies to each other.

That such is the fact, that the local assembly represents in its locality the universal house and also every assembly everywhere else; that such are the relations of the assemblies to one another in the Scriptures is made manifest by the fact that the apostle insists that he gave to the assemblies everywhere the same fundamental character. Everywhere he established the same outward order. Everywhere he appointed the same internal arrangement. In 1 Cor. 4: 17, he says, "As I teach everywhere in every church." In chap. 7: 17, he says, "So ordain I in all churches." In chap. 11: 23, he tells us he received a special revelation as to the matter of the breaking of bread. He deposited this revelation with the saints at Corinth. Surely he delivered it to all the churches elsewhere, to "all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." A meeting, such as Mr. M. suggests, has not this representative character. It is destructive of it. It is not representatively Christian, but subversive of apostolic authority, and overruling the will and mind of God. It overthrows the nature and character of the fellow-



ship our Lord has established and committed to the Church.

Mr. M. thinks his way would end much dissension. Very likely. Taking away Christianity from the earth would also end much dissension and division. And the apostle would certainly not have had to speak as he did of the heavy burden "which cometh upon me daily, *the care of all the churches,*" had he had Mr. M.'s advice to follow. Independency is attractive, as it offers the privileges divested of their responsibilities.

Is not then the Lord present, and the table the Lord's table, in such a meeting as Mr. M. proposes? This is not for *man* to determine, and it is not the point before us. Our province is to judge of principles approved or disapproved by the word of God; or of facts which can be proved or disproved by witnesses. Beyond that all belongs to God alone.

Mr. M. asserts much. He is fond of the expression "I maintain." Let God's people not be moved, but cling more than ever to His word. It will make them "wise unto salvation" in every subject; and every subject connected with Christ has serious issues.

Let us now consider Mr. M.'s interpretation of 2 Tim. 2: 20-22 in the light of the passage itself.

No one taught of God understands by the apostle's term, "a great house," that the house of God as fundamentally constructed is intended. There are no "vessels to dishonor" in the house of God as fundamentally constructed and arranged. If we think of it as Christ's building ("I will build My

Church," Matt. 16: 18), we cannot conceive of His building with *bad* material. If we think of it as the "habitation of God by the Spirit" (Eph. 2: 22), it is composed of saints *alone*. There may be believers from among Jews and believers from among Gentiles in this habitation, but *only* believers compose it. "A great house," containing both "vessels to honor" and "vessels to dishonor," is therefore not used by the apostle to illustrate, or symbolize, the house of God in its fundamental character.

A reference to 1 Cor. 3: 9-15 will help to form a true idea of what the expression, "a great house," is intended to represent. The apostle, as having received from God a dispensation, or administration (Eph. 3: 2), was constituted "master builder," i. e., the authoritative establisher of the house of God in the outward form it was to have as an institution of God set up here on earth among men, and in the internal arrangement by which it was to be characterized. In this sense he laid the foundation of the house of God. He did it under the special guidance of the Spirit of God. The purpose of the Spirit in guiding the apostle in the work, (the administration given to him) was to set up and establish among men an institution to have the character of being the pillar and foundation of the truth (1 Tim. 3: 15). This I may express as follows: The house of God, fundamentally, is both the proclamation and the upholder of the truth—the truth of the great mystery of the person of the Christ. The apostle Paul, by the will of God, was the "master builder" of such an institution. He therefore says, in 1 Cor. 3: 10, "I have laid the foundation." He had established

its outward form and internal arrangement. In verse 11 he insists that this is the only thing that is the house of God fundamentally. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid" means, that any other construction is not the building of God's design: that it is not, and could not be, the pillar and foundation of the truth—the proclamation and upholder of the truth of Jesus Christ.

Other servants are solemnly warned as to their responsibility in regard to the character of this institution established by the apostle. "Let every man take heed *how* he builds." Each builder is responsible to carry on the apostolic building; to *so* build that his work will result *only* in what is the original character of the building—the reflection, or display, of the perfections of Christ. Any building resulting in what is the fruit of fallen, sinful man—the man who does not endure, whose glory passes away as the flower of grass, and who has become like stubble to be consumed by the fire of the judgment of God—is not maintaining and carrying on the apostolic foundation.

The idea of the Spirit, in Paul, was not a house containing a mixture of vessels of gold, silver and precious stones with vessels of wood, hay, and stubble—"vessels to honor" and "vessels to dishonor." Such a house is not the house of God according to its apostolic foundation. 2 Tim. 2:20 does not therefore represent the house of God in its fundamental character, but as the result of not heeding his warning in 1 Cor. 3:10: it is that which has *not* maintained the fundamental character of the house of God. It has become such as admits mix-

ture: a house so planned that "vessels to dishonor" can come in with "vessels to honor."

In the house according to God's thought, of which Paul laid the foundation, there was no conception of a house in which there should be use for "vessels to dishonor." The Master of Paul's house has no dishonorable service. *All* His service is honorable. The plan of this house did not contemplate the mixing together of saved and unsaved. There was no provision in it for any service by the unregenerate.

In 2 Tim. 2: 20 the house is not so. It is characterized by mixture—a house of unholy associations. There are "vessels to honor" in it, but associated, alas, with "vessels to dishonor." While so associated the "vessels to honor" are not "sanctified" vessels. They are "vessels to honor" in unholy associations.\*

If, then, the "vessels to honor" are saved persons in association with "vessels to dishonor," or unsaved persons, what is the responsibility of the "vessels to honor?" What ought saved persons in unholy associations to do? Verse 21 gives us the answer. "If a man purge out himself *from* these, he shall be a

\* Of course, the house of God, as founded by the apostle, abides, because the Spirit maintains what He Himself established by the apostle. What is called "a great house" is not a new foundation, but the perversion of that already laid. The perversion is not of the Spirit of God. The great need is to learn what is the authoritative apostolic foundation, so as to be able to distinguish it from its perversion by bad builders. The Spirit maintains the true, and all who build by the Spirit, build after that pattern: all else is of man, not of God.

vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." The meaning of this is perfectly plain; there is no excuse whatever for misunderstanding it. A "vessel to honor"—a saved man—any child of God, in association with the unsaved—is in unholy associations, and is not a "sanctified" vessel to honor. He is not a vessel suited for the Master's use. He is not a vessel prepared for *every* good work. While he is a "vessel to honor" he needs to purge himself out from the unholy associations in which he is, in order to become a "vessel to honor, *sanctified*," and suited for "every good work" in the service of the Lord. And a Christian who argues not, but obeys, must of necessity find himself apart from true Christians who are in the unholy association, and are not obedient. "Stand away (or stand apart) from iniquity, every one who names the name of the Lord" has already been the imperative demand of verse 19 on the Christian; and, responding to it, the "vessel to honor" purges himself out from the "vessels to dishonor." If "vessels to honor" do not obey, but still continue in the iniquitous association, *they* are responsible for the being away from their brethren, not the ones who obey. If the responsibility put upon those who name the name of the Lord is accepted and acted on, there is no escape from this.

I notice here a very shocking argument, profess- edly based on the force of the word for "purge" in the original Greek. I have usually found that a little parade of Greek is very unreliable. The word used here has the force of "purge out" ("expurge"). Its object is "himself." It is not purge out *of* himself,

but "purge out *himself*." From what? From the other vessels. This is the only possible meaning the language of the apostle can have.

In the face of such plain language, Mr. M. says (p. 25):

"But from what must he purge himself in order that he may be a vessel unto honor? From other vessels? That, I say again, is manifestly impossible. A vessel can be purged only from what it contains, or from what may adhere to it on the outside. The thought of separation from other vessels is as far as it is possible to get from the thought of this passage, for the passage directs attention to the condition of the vessel itself, *not* to that of other vessels. The aspirant for honorable service is admonished, not to *look out and around* for evil in his fellow-saints and to withdraw from their society, *but to look within* for evil in himself, and to purge *himself* from that."

This needs but to be quoted alongside the passage itself to manifest its opposition to Scripture. It is astonishing to find in a single paragraph such a collection of unwarrantable assertions. "A vessel can be purged only from what it contains, or from what may adhere to it on the outside" (!) Where did Mr. M. learn that? "The thought of separation from other vessels is as far as it is possible to get from the thought of this passage" (!) A mere assertion, in opposition to the plain words of the apostle. "The passage directs attention to the condition of the vessel itself, *not* to that of other vessels." That is, from what Mr. M. says elsewhere, the vessel is to purge itself from *its own* filthiness! All this is mere assertion, very presumptuous assertion, in the face of the

plain statements of the passage. This is not a reverent, but an unholy, handling of the word of God.

Mr. M. quotes other passages in which the word "purge" occurs, to try to prove his assertions. He omits to tell his readers that the construction of those passages is different. For instance, in speaking of the form of the verb "purge," he says, "It is found in Matt. 8: 3 and Luke 4: 27 to describe cleansing the leprosy from (out of) the leper." But in neither case is the construction the same as in 2 Tim. 2: 21. "*Him*" in Matt. 8: 3 is *genitive*, while "*himself*" in 2 Tim. 2: 21 is *accusative*. Such mistreatment of the Word is very reprehensible.

But let us pass on. "Vessels to honor" should indeed "shun youthful lusts." But the purging lusts out of oneself is not all that God claims of us. He knows it is impossible to "follow righteousness, faith, love, peace," with a pure, or single, heart while associated with "vessels to dishonor." As long as we maintain the association our hearts are double—our eye is not single—our purposes, or motives, are mixed. To follow "righteousness, faith, love, peace," *with* a "pure heart," we must necessarily give up associations that enslave us to motives other than those the Lord forms in us. But in freeing ourselves from associations which put us in bondage to unholy motives, we find ourselves in the same path and position with others who have in like manner submitted to the Lord's claim. In this verse the apostle now directs us to continue in this path, pursuing together the things which we are now free to pursue with a pure heart. It puts a curb on the spirit of independency into which, in separating from

others, we might easily fall. It is perhaps natural to us; but nature is not to control us. We are to be governed by the word of God. It is plain then that the word of God *does* have something to say to us about our associations. It tells us *what* associations to keep *separate from*, and *what* associations to *go on with*. It is plain that in the matter of our associations it is not a sufficient rule to insist merely on personal soundness in doctrine and godliness in individual walk. The word of God, as is plain, does require these things, but it imperatively demands more. It insists on holy associations; it forbids unholy ones.

Disobedience therefore in the matter of associations is sinful as surely as it is sinful in other matters. The prophet Samuel tells us, "*To obey is better than sacrifice, and to harken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry*" (1 Sam. 15: 22, 23). Saul had not obeyed. He had set up his own reasons against the plain will of God. If we are indifferent to what God has made known of His will, no matter in what, we are not in a right state of soul, but wilfully disobedient.

If God has declared that His mind is that the vessels to be used in His service should be separated from unholy associations, it is a very poor thing in us to talk about "fellow-saints." Sanctioning and having fellowship with them *in* their unholy associations is not the way to show them our love. Another apostle tells us that loving God and *keeping His commandments* is the proof that we love the children of God (1 John 5: 2). This may cost us much;



but love yields all to God. The Lord give us the spirit of obedience!

Let us follow Mr. M. a little further. He says: "It is perfectly clear that this scripture (2 Tim. 2) has *no reference at all* to the qualifications of a saint for companionship or personal association with other saints, either in the breaking of bread or anything else, but that it refers solely to his qualifications for high-grade service."

Indeed! Are these sober words, or the invention of the mind slipping away from the humility that is in Christ? Where does Scripture ever speak of "high-grade service?" Not this passage, as any sober reading of it will show. It is foreign to the spirit and teaching of Scripture.

Again, of the same passage, he says: "Separation from *one's own appetites* is the only separation that is spoken of." Why, then, what immediately follows: "Flee *also* youthful lusts?"

But Mr. M.'s teaching in page 25 becomes unholy, casting reproach upon God's holy character. He says:

"Nevertheless the vessels are *all* in the house, and are necessarily in company one with another. Moreover, they are all needful for the service of the house, though there are various grades of service, some honorable, some dishonorable."

Dishonorable service in the house of God! Has the Master of the house of God dishonorable duties to assign to any one of His vessels? Mr. M. is so affected by a false principle that he does not apprehend the difference between the house as established

by God, and the perversion of it by bad men or careless brethren. Evidently there is yet "unlearned" teaching to "avoid."

Much more might be said to the same effect; but it is painful, and I cease. In conclusion, it is evident that Mr. M. has not apprehended the fundamental construction and arrangement of the house of God. Through the apostle Paul the Spirit has given the pattern which the saints are responsible to keep to and carry on. Through the apostle God has revealed the truth as to it, and it is to be received by faith as truly as any other revealed truth. Failing to apprehend the revealed mind and will of God as to this, Mr. M. has also failed to realize the true place of the breaking of bread in the fellowship which God's Son has set up on earth. In his scheme it loses entirely its character as to the expression of the fellowship of the whole Church. It becomes merely the expression of a local independent meeting, and even then only of the fellowship of those "who happen to be gathered" at the time.

The representative character of the local assembly is not seen by him; therefore the relations which in Scripture the assemblies have to each other are not understood. Consequently the representative character of the local assembly, and its relation to the universal assembly, is unknown. In the apostolic Epistles the local meeting is not a mere local meeting, independent of the saints that elsewhere call upon the name of the Lord: it is *their* representative in the locality, expressing *their* fellowship in that place, and in full responsibility to them all.

The lack of this knowledge has led Mr. M.

into what we have seen is nothing short of a delusion. I do not question his Christianity and endowment with rich gifts. The sorrow is to see this marred, and the vessel hindered from being "prepared unto *every* good work." May the Lord yet make our brother such a vessel! If we have spoken sharply at times, it has been from no personal animosity, but the sense of the deep wrong done to the truth and to God's people.