

“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God...” (1 Peter 4:11).

“After Services...Fellowship”

by Larry Ray Hafley

Recently, I received a bulletin announcing the worship services of a church of Christ. It said, “Immediately after services, we will have a period of fellowship”. This was a reference to a meal in their “Fellowship Hall”.

Consider it. Did they not have “fellowship” during their worship services?! Alas, this typifies how the social gospel has usurped spiritual words, changing that which is divine and holy into that which is secular and worldly. As someone said, “When I hear the word, ‘fellowship,’ I can smell the coffee and taste the donuts”. This is true today, but was it true in the New Testament?

“Fellowship”,

communion, is a Bible term. Not once was it used to signify a social meal — not once! Have we ceased to “speak where the Bible speaks”? What does it mean to “call Bible things by Bible names” and “do Bible things in Bible ways”? See Isaiah 8:20; 1 Corinthians 4:6; 1 Peter 4:11.

We are called into the “fellowship” of Christ by the gospel (1 Corinthians 1:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:14). “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). It does not say, “We eat together that we may have fellowship”.

Brethren say it. The Bible does not. When Paul prayed that “the communion (fellowship) of the Holy Spirit”, might be with the brethren, for what was he praying (2 Corinthians 13:14)? If the answer to that question does not involve a social supper, why do brethren today equate fellowship with eating and drinking together?

How can we have “the fellowship of the Spirit”? Let an apostle answer, “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). Could language be plainer? How, then, do brethren say, “When we eat and drink together, we have fellowship one with

another”?

When we eat that bread and drink that cup, “is it not the communion (fellowship) of the blood of Christ?” “Is it not the communion (fellowship) of the body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:16, 17)? Yes, it is! Why, then, do brethren speak of “fellowship” as a lunch “after services”? Where is the passage that speaks of our fellowship in this manner? Where? Calling me an “anti” and smiling in contempt will not answer the questions raised. You may feel better, but you and I know that you have not dealt with the fact that Bible fellowship is a spiritual relationship

in the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13b; Ephesians 3:6). It is not plastic forks and styrofoam cups. You know it, and I know it, “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17).

Years ago, if elders had announced they were going to build a formal “dining room” or a cozy “cafeteria”, brethren would have rejected them. However, when they were given a “spiritual” connotation, “Fellowship Halls”, that made them more palatable. “Fellowship Hall” sounds less fleshly, more spiritual. It worked.

As Paul said of Israel, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play” (1 Corinthians 10:7).

Since we demand of our religious neighbors that we define baptism according to the Bible, and not by the dictionary, and insist that we baptize as they did in the New Testament, and not as the traditions of men direct, why do we not do the same with the term, “fellowship”? However, if we may pervert the term “fellowship”, and make it refer to “refreshments”, why object to those who want to pervert the term “baptism”, and make it mean “sprinkling”? Tell me. Why?

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