

Bars of Fellowship

As touching resolutions of non-fellowship I observe two extremes. One is to make a test of fellowship out of almost everything. The other is to make a test of fellowship out of almost nothing.

Recently at a church in another part of the country where I had filled an appointment an Elder who has been involved in receiving brethren into fellowship who had been properly excluded from sister churches, came to me and said, "Brother Harris, We'd like to have you come preach for us anytime. We don't have bars of fellowship against anyone."

This brother's statement may be ever so true, but when anyone begins taking in those who have been legally and scripturally excluded from orderly churches, or, as to that matter, when they begin taking in wrongly excluded brethren without first laboring with the erring church in a spiritual and exhaustive way, they are, in effect, saying they do not want my fellowship for such practices have always caused division within the ranks of Israel. And whether those who do such things ever officially raise any bars of fellowship against others or not they nevertheless cut themselves off from those who will not tolerate such unscriptural procedures.

To ignore the official work of orderly sister churches is to treat them with a contempt and disrespect which is sure to call forth the displeasure of God as well as to alienate the affections of those who are thus treated so contemptuously. There is no way for brethren to live together in peace when such things are being done among them. --

Elder Ralph Harris