

When One Is Disfellowshipped— WHICH FAMILY COMES FIRST?

*Which FAMILY must the Christian put first —
the natural human family or the GOD
Family into which he is begotten?*

By Herbert W. Armstrong

IF YOU ARE really a Christian, you are a begotten child of God — begotten into the GOD FAMILY.

God says, through the apostle John, “Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be . . .” (I John 3:2).

We, if Christians, are NOW in this present physical life, already begotten sons of God. What we shall be when Christ appears — at His soon Second Coming — cannot now be SEEN — does not yet APPEAR. But, “we shall be like Him” (same verse). How does He *appear*? If our mortal physical eyes could see Him, we would see His eyes as flames of fire and His countenance as the sun — full strength.

Verse 1 says, “the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.” Other members of your human family, unconverted, cannot see Christ in you.

What is a Christian?

Now what *is* a Christian? Romans 8:9 says, “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” If one is not being led by the Spirit of God he is not a Christian.

Those, then, in your own human family who do not have God’s Holy Spirit active in them — who are not being led by the Holy Spirit — simply *cannot* see or recognize Christ *IN YOU* — if you are a Christian. Now where does that lead us?

YOU, who do have and are led by

“Now we COMMAND YOU, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye WITHDRAW yourselves from *every brother* that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.”

God’s Spirit — who are Christians — are now members of a TOTALLY DIFFERENT FAMILY — the begotten (not yet born) FAMILY OF GOD! Other members of your human family — your parents, your brothers and sisters — your children — who are *not* led by God’s Spirit — are NOT members of the begotten FAMILY OF GOD.

Now does that of itself cut you OFF from your human family?

Of itself, NO! For example, your children may be too young to be converted into the begotten FAMILY OF GOD. Yet they are your RESPONSIBILITY. How about your parents? God’s Fifth Commandment tells you to HONOR your parents, and it does not say dishonor them if they are not begotten into the GOD FAMILY!

What, then? Your membership in the FAMILY OF GOD does not cut off your membership in your human family.

But, can the actions of one of *them* cut them off from you? THAT IS THE BIG QUESTION HERE!

Your conversion into the GOD FAMILY does not, of itself, cut you off from a right and proper family love and relationship with your natural human family. You must still love them.

BUT, you CANNOT have true Christian fellowship with them. Through John, God says also, I John 1:7, that we Christians who “walk in the light” have fellowship one with another.

That is, with other like *believers*, led by God’s Spirit. But verse 3 of this same chapter says, “and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

Now assuredly the still carnal and unconverted members of our human

family do not, and CANNOT, have this fellowship with God the Father and with the living Jesus Christ.

We are also commanded, "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5:11).

We cannot have 1) Christian and spiritual fellowship with members of our human family who are unconverted, 2) we cannot have even non-spiritual fellowship with them, if the association with them takes us into things contrary to the Christian life or things of evil — the "unfruitful works [or conduct] of darkness."

We CAN have an association with them that avoids either the extreme of participating in things evil (like, for example, telling dirty stories) — or trying to speak with them about the Bible or about God or spiritual things.

If one of them shows an interest and asks a question about the Bible or the Church, answer the question in a noncontroversial manner, but do not try to continue "getting them interested" — for you will only turn them away and cause hard feelings or worse. YOU CANNOT "CONVERT" YOUR HUMAN FAMILY. DON'T TRY!

What, then, can you talk about with the unconverted members of your physical family? The things THEY are interested in — so long as it is neither evil, nor controversial spiritually.

What of a DISFELLOWSHIPED MEMBER?

But what of a member of your human family who had come into the Church and is excommunicated for causing discord and division or other spiritual offense in the Church?

Ah, now we really DO have a question loaded with dynamite! But if we let GOD and His Word give us direction, we shall DO WHAT IS RIGHT IN HIS EYES!

In Romans 16:17 it speaks of marking "them which cause DIVISIONS and OFFENCES CONTRARY TO THE DOCTRINE WHICH YE HAVE LEARNED." It does not say, "all except members of your flesh-and-blood family." It speaks of ANY who has been a Church member. And it says, "AVOID THEM"! Look now further.

In II Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15 is the COMMAND: "Now we COMMAND YOU, brethren, in the name of our

Lord Jesus Christ, that ye WITHDRAW yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. . . . And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy" (verses 14-15).

That is speaking of any brother, whether in the Lord — or in the human family.

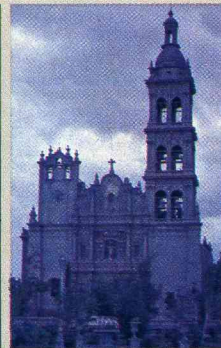
It is a COMMAND. And if we try to be MORE KIND — MORE RIGHTEOUS — than God and DISOBEY THAT COMMAND, we convict ourselves of disobedience of God's COMMAND!

Yet we are not to treat such a one as an enemy!

This is a question that never has been expounded to the Church before to my knowledge. I have tried to make it PLAIN, as GOD instructs.

Jesus said: "And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:36-37).

We must love Christ MORE! □



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