

**February 11, 1851**

**From the Brother-Meeting in Strassburg to the Churches**

The brothers in Strassburg wish the kindred churches everywhere grace from God our Father and from Jesus Christ our Lord, peace.

In our brother-meeting of the 10th instant, the question how we have to comport ourselves toward the excommunicated was raised and brought up for discussion, so as to have a uniform standard in all places. For it has turned out that there is a dissimilarity therein and, to a certain degree, disorder occurs, as some greet the excommunicated with the brother name and extended right hand, but the others cannot do so because of scruples of conscience.

You know that we according to the measure of the sinning have a twofold measure of punishing. For lesser sins which are deserving of punishment, the simple exclusion from the kiss and the Lord's Supper, so as to attest to our displeasure with the sin of the impure one, that he is not worthy of participating in the holy, although he remains a member of the church.

But for gross sins and offenses, complete excommunication from the church, so as thereby to testify to our displeasure with the sinner himself that his is not deserving to be a co-member of the church. The latter exclusion, at all events, borders on a judgment of condemnation and puts life and death on the scales, although by it we hope for the better (inasmuch as the fallen still has a hope left and the sin was not unto death) and should a recovery and reacceptance take place, the latter then occurs not by a new baptism but as a result of the baptism by means of which the believing one had entered into the covenant of Christ in the beginning of his new life.

For that reason have I (Brother Froehlich) also, in accordance with love, always held that the name of brother or sister and the extending of the hand could be retained even though we, according to the word of the apostle, are not permitted to eat with such an one (I Cor. 5:11), as Paul there explicitly says: "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 an one no not to eat." Others objected to such excommunicated longer being called a brother or sister and the hand extended to them in order that they become rightly humbled, in order that they all fear sin and know what it is if in eternity one would have to be excluded from the community of the holy and the blessed. However, if the intent has been achieved and the excommunicated one repents, is humbled and recovers, his punishment may be mitigated to the extent that we can again greet him as brother and extend the hand and have him eat with us, until the time he is considered worthy of full fellowship in kiss and holy communion.

We found that with the existing system, if it is left to everyone, a kind of partiality is allowed or permitted, that if one is liked better than the other, he is given the hand and Brother said, arbitrarily, and that stemming from this an evil retroaction comes about even among the excommunicated ones so that some receive and nourish an offense instead that the discipline should cause a heartfelt humbling. This abuse should now be corrected and obviated by all being treated alike, without regard of person, and only the result can show who may again be accepted up to the kiss and holy communion and who not. Total shunning of the excommunicated one should show him how grievous and bitter sin is, so that all guard against it.

By this communication to you, we have in view a uniformity in all churches of the saints; if it seems to you we have judged rightly, with which we also send our fellowship and brotherly greeting in the love of Christ.

The elder-brothers in the church at Strassburg:

Friedrich Pfaff  
Samuel Heinrich Froehlich  
John Diebold  
George Mangold