

SCRIPTURAL FELLOWSHIP.

"And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."—Acts ii. 42.



METHODISM is the revival of primitive Christianity. There are four essentials to the organization of a Christian Church. The recognition of the word of God, or the "Apostles doctrine" and preaching; "class-meetings," or "fellowship;" sacraments, or "breaking of bread," and prayer. It is a trite saying, man is a social being. Religion does not destroy or ignore this fact.

Perhaps there never was a period in the history of the world when the principle of mutual dependence was so fully recognized as at the present day. Men who have a common interest at stake, who desire to promote a special object, and who feel that united they may profit by one another's counsels, band themselves together, and appoint their semi-weekly, or weekly, or monthly meetings; when together, unitedly, they assemble at a given place to converse with one another, and plan how they may best succeed in accomplishing the special object for which they exist as a society or organization. It is easy to see the wisdom and design of all this. Will Christians, then, allow political parties, scientific societies, or literary associations to reap advantages from mutual and regular fellowship, while they cultivate no disposition to meet together for the special and definite purpose of promoting and extending the cause of Christ, and helping one another on in the way to heaven? It will not be regarded as an answer to all this to say, that Christians do thus meet together when they assemble for public worship on the Lord's day, for this is far removed from the idea of "fellowship." Our public congregations are promiscuous gatherings, where the scriptural idea of "fellowship" is not attempted for obvious reasons. Christians must meet "together" a select gathering, they must be separated from the world, and thus continue in the Apostles doctrine and fellowship.

Are "class-meetings" an invention of the Church, or a divinely appointed means of grace? Such meetings are constantly alluded to, and distinctly recommended in the Holy Scriptures. We must not be led astray by a name. "Fellowship" meetings would convey a better idea to a stranger, concerning the nature and character of such a means of grace as Methodists designate "class-meetings." "Fellowship,"— "companionship, mutual association, familiar intercourse, communion," thus Webster defines the meaning of this word. Now the question is not, Do the Scriptures authorize what is technically called a "class-meeting?" but, Do the Scriptures authorize Christians to come out from the world, to meet "together" as Christians, and when thus met together, in this special select gathering, to "pray" for one another, to "edify" one another, to "admonish" and "exhort" one another, and to "confess" their "faults one to another."