

# THE BASIS OF THE FELLOWSHIP.

But looking at the second factor in our definition, we observe that the Church is not only a fellowship, it is specifically a fellowship constituted by faith, and it could not be constituted in any other way; for a fellowship is an intimate personal relationship, a joint participation, an actual communion and friendship based upon mutual confidence and self-surrender. God gives Himself to us; and we give ourselves to God. By faith we appropriate to ourselves the love which He reveals towards us; we believe it, rest upon it, respond to it, and surrender our own love in return. Faith is not an end, but a means. Love is greater, as St. Paul says, simply because love is the fellowship itself into which faith leads, in which faith binds those who trust. There can be no fellowship without faith. Distrust destroys it. Distrust is, in its very nature, a principle of alienation and separation. When confidence is lost, business is paralyzed, the bonds of kinship are loosed, and the fabric of society is threatened with dissolution. It was unbelief which destroyed the original fellowship with his Maker in which man was placed at his creation. Faith now restores the broken unity. It makes us, as St. Paul declares, sons of God. It replaces us in a true filial relationship to our Father in heaven, and becomes the bond of unity which constitutes all believers one body, one brotherhood in Christ, "the household of the faith."

This fellowship is what is called in the Scriptures the "everlasting covenant," the expressive designation applied both in the law and the prophets to the fellowship of God with His people. For a covenant between God and man cannot have any other meaning than this, as the Prophet Jeremiah has declared, that He will be their God and they His people. On God's part, it is love which is the foundation of the fellowship; love which finds at last its chief expression in the self-giving of God in the Incarnation and