



● In the case of where a father or mother or son or daughter is disfellowshipped, how should such person be treated by members of the family in their family relationship?—P. C., Ontario, Canada.

We are not living today among theocratic nations where such members of our fleshly family relationship could be exterminated for apostasy from God and his theocratic organization, as was possible and was ordered in the nation of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai and in the land of Palestine. "Thou shalt surely kill him; thy hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him to death with stones, because he hath sought to draw thee away from Jehovah thy God, . . . And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is in the midst of thee." —Deut. 13:6-11, A.S.

Being limited by the laws of the worldly nation in which we live and also by the laws of God through Jesus Christ, we can take action against apostates only to a certain extent, that is, consistent with both sets of laws. The law of the land and God's law through Christ forbid us to kill apostates, even though they be members of our own flesh-and-blood family relationship. However, God's law requires us to recognize their being disfellowshipped from his congregation, and this despite the fact that the law of the land in which we live requires us under some natural obligation to live with and have dealings with such apostates under the same roof.

God's law does not allow a marriage partner to dismiss his mate because his mate becomes disfellowshipped or apostatizes. Neither will the law of the land in most cases allow a divorce to be granted on such grounds. The faithful believer and the apostate or disfellowshipped mate must legally continue to live together and render proper marriage dues one to the other. A

father may not legally dismiss his minor child from his household because of apostasy or disfellowshipping, and a minor child or children may not abandon their father or their mother just because he becomes unfaithful to God and his theocratic organization. The parent must by laws of God and of man fulfill his parental obligations to the child or children as long as they are dependent minors, and the child or children must render filial submission to the parent as long as legally underage or as long as being without parental consent to depart from the home. Of course, if the children are of age, then there can be a departing and breaking of family ties in a physical way, because the spiritual ties have already snapped.

If children are of age and continue to associate with a disfellowshipped parent because of receiving material support from him or her, then they must consider how far their spiritual interests are being endangered by continuing under this unequal arrangement, and whether they can arrange to support themselves, living apart from the fallen-away parent. Their continuing to receive material support should not make them compromise so as to ignore the disfellowshipped state of the parent. If, because of acting according to the disfellowship order of the company of God's people, they become threatened with a withdrawal of the parental support, then they must be willing to take such consequences.

Satan's influence through the disfellowshipped member of the family will be to cause the other member or members of the family who are in the truth to join the disfellowshipped member in his course or in his position toward God's organization. To do this would be disastrous, and so the faithful family member must recognize and conform to the disfellowship order. How would or could this be done while living under the same roof or in personal, physical contact daily with the disfellowshipped? In this way: By refusing to have religious relationship with the disfellowshipped.

The marriage partner would render the marriage dues according to the law of the land and in due payment for all material benefits bestowed and accepted. But to have religious communion with the disfellowshipped person—no, there would be none of that! The faithful marriage partner would not discuss religion

with the apostate or disfellowshipped and would not accompany that one to his (or her) place of religious association and participate in the meetings with that one. As Jesus said: "If he does not listen even to the congregation [which was obliged to disfellowship him], let him be to you just as a man of the nations and as a tax collector [to Jehovah's sanctified nation]." (Matt. 18:17, NW) Hurt to such one would not be authorized, but there would be no spiritual or religious fellowshiping.

The same rule would apply to those who are in the relation of parent and child or of child and parent. What natural obligation falls upon them according to man's law and God's law the faithful parent or the faithful child will comply with. But as for rendering more than that and having religious fellowship with such one in violation of the congregation's disfellowship order—no, none of that for the faithful one! If the faithful suffers in some material or

other way for the faithful adherence to theocratic law, then he must accept this as suffering for righteousness' sake.

The purpose of observing the disfellowship order is to make the disfellowshipped one realize the error of his way and to shame him, if possible, so that he may be recovered, and also to safeguard your own salvation to life in the new world in vindication of God. (2 Thess. 3:14, 15; Titus 2:8) Because of being in close, indissoluble natural family ties and being of the same household under the one roof you may have to eat material food and live physically with that one at home, in which case 1 Corinthians 5:9-11 and 2 John 10 could not apply; but do not defeat the purpose of the congregation's disfellowship order by eating spiritual or religious food with such one or receiving such one favorably in a religious way and bidding him farewell with a wish for his prosperity in his apostate course.