

Seek The Old Paths

"Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths...and walk therein."
(Jeremiah 6:16)

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GENERAL BAPTIST DOCTRINES

Victor M. Eskew

*The beast of denominationalism did not exist in the first century.
It is a late-comer to history.*

This article will contain a discussion of some of the general doctrines of the Baptist Church. Before we begin, we want to make some preliminary comments. First, each of the statements we make will be made from evidence. In other words, if we make a statement about a doctrine, we will have some type of documentation to establish the truthfulness of the statement. In this case the information is generally accepted as true, or, it comes from the manual of the Baptist Church. We want to be truthful. We do not intend to misrepresent anything that is said.

Second, there will be some individuals who will accuse us of being mean spirited. There will be others who will say we are not being loving. Others will attempt to belittle our actions as being unkind. My friends, these are not our intentions. Any statement to that effect is a plain, simple lie. Our intent is to teach the truth. It is to help individuals see wherein their doctrines stand in contradiction to the truth. Jesus said: *"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:32). Paul wrote that love *"rejoiceth in the truth"* (1 Cor. 13:6). Our efforts are out of love for the souls of mankind. We would not hesitate to go before God at this very moment and be judged for the intents and motives of our actions in this lesson.

Third, we are sure there will be some individuals who will disagree with some of the statements we will be making. If you disagree, we would love to hear from you. You can write us, and we will be happy to discuss these matters in more detail. Two contradictory statements cannot be true. Those who hold to the contradictory statements should be willing to sit down and see who is right and who is wrong. Possibly, both will be found to be wrong. One thing is for certain, however, both cannot be right.

The religious group that we want to discuss is the Baptist Church. One reason we have chosen to discuss this group is because it is the largest religious group in the South. There are literally thousands and thousands of individuals who have been influenced by Baptist doctrine.

We want to discuss three general points about the Baptist Church that do not harmonize with the Scriptures. These three points have to do with the name of the institution, the manual which the church has, and the fact that it is a denomination. As we consider these three points, we want our Baptist friends to give heed to a statement in their own manual. It says: *"The Bible contains the revelation of God to man. It is the supreme standard of faith and practice. Whatever conforms to this standard is right — whatever deviates*

from it is wrong. It is a duty incumbent upon all to 'search the Scriptures' and learn what they teach. This duty cannot be faithfully performed unless prejudices and preconceived opinions are laid aside" (The Baptist Manual, J. M. Pendleton, p.41). This statement is absolutely true. All we ask of you is that you put it in practice as we go through this discussion. Be honest, and listen to see if the things we are telling you are the truth.

THE BAPTIST CHURCH IS A DENOMINATION

The Baptist Church admits that it is a denomination. In other words, they are just part of a whole. When all the Baptists are brought together, they do not comprise the whole. A denomination only makes up a part of the whole. They would also include others in the group that makes up the whole. Their denomination, therefore, is larger than the local congregation and it is smaller than the church universal.

Our question is, "Where is this arrangement found in the pages of God's Holy Word?" Is there a book, chapter and verse in the New Testament which authorizes a denomination? Can any of my Baptist neigh-

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General Baptist Doctrines...



Guest Editorial

DIVINELY SANCTIONED DIVISION

Tom Wacaster

I was rummaging through my files on “unity” and “division,” and I came across an article that appeared in the Dallas Morning News just over three years ago. The title of the article was “Church Alliance Proposed.” I’ll share with you the lead-in statement: “*The National Council of Churches is going to try to form a new organization that would for the first time include all major branches of U.S. Christianity, its board decided today.*”

This new organization is supposed to “give birth to a new ecumenical future.” I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet, but I can assure you that this effort is doomed to failure. Five hundred years have proven that all such “ecumenical” efforts that have their basis in human wisdom do not produce unity. Unity can only come by compliance to the word of God. This “birth to a new ecumenical future” is based upon compromise, not humble submission to God and His will. The best that can be expected is a loose form of unity that agrees to disagree. It is just another step in an effort on the part of foolish men to erect a “tower of Babel” that will compete with God’s plan.

When will men learn that there is a far cry difference between unity and union? Someone once said you can tie two cats together by their tails and throw them over a close line. You may have “union,” but you will not have “unity.” Unfortunately, some of our own brethren need to learn this lesson. Attempts to join hands with the denominations is futile, not to mention out of harmony with God’s word.

Paul instructed us, “*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them*” (Eph. 5:11). Why is that admonition so hard to understand? “No fellowship” means “no fellowship.” Actually, I don’t think it is a problem

with understanding Paul’s instructions. It has, rather, to do with willingness to obey that simple injunction. Fellowship with the denominations is sinful.

But let me address another grievous error that is destroying the body of Christ from within. I think you will appreciate what I have to say if I lay some background. The following incidents are representative of the wrong attitude and the right attitude in addressing this horrible injustice being perpetrated upon the bride of Christ.

The first incident concerns a congregation with which I am personally acquainted that has, through the years, struggled with the liberal tendencies that all of us have faced since the early 80s. That congregation suffered a horrible split a little over a decade ago. The “liberal element” packed their bags and went elsewhere. One would think, therefore, that their problems were behind them and the future would be bright. But due to a lack of proper leadership, they began to drift down the same old path until they are once again plagued with the push for change by certain elements within the congregation. Some concerned brethren have shared with me their sorrow and dismay in what seems another inevitable drift (more like a plunge) into liberalism. When I was asked what might be done, I simply told them, “Its time to walk away and start another congregation.” The response I received from such a suggestion? “Well, we hate the idea of splitting the Lord’s church.”

The second incident has to do with a congregation just southeast of Dallas, Texas that had reached the state of complete rebellion against God and His pattern for worship. The story is shocking, but not surprising. Elders upheld error, calling good, evil and evil, good. Here was a congregation well known for its zeal, dedication, and evangelistic spirit, that had

in the space of five or six years moved so far away from the truth that one wonders why they simply did not pull the sign off the building and replace it with some denominational title to their liking. But once again, there were members who had built that congregation; members who had sacrificed their time and finances to build a shining light in this little central Texas city. Here were men and women who hated sin and hated what it had done to the body of Christ. When things had become so intolerable they decided that it was time to “come out from among them, and be ye separate” (2 Cor. 6:17). They recognized the undeniable truth that faithfulness to the Lord is not faithfulness to some physical plant, but to the word that our Lord gave to us. Consequently those faithful brethren who loved the truth decided it was time to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph. 5:11), and established a new congregation dedicated to doing all things according to the pattern revealed in God’s word.

There is a false notion that division, any division, is wrong. Some have the mistaken idea that brethren simply must tolerate error and put up with the false teachers, unqualified elders, and blasphemous and vain worship that is occurring and simply “love” one another regardless of how far they might move away from the truth of God’s word. We must not forget that Jesus warned His disciples, “*Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword*” (Matt. 10:34). Consequently, they, like those in the first incident to which I refer, complain and moan about what is happening in the Lord’s church (as they should do). But that is about as far as it goes. They continue to tolerate the error, contribute to the work of that congregation, and wring their hands in utter despair at what is happening.

On the other hand there are those who, thankfully, are willing to walk away from error. They are not committed to property, parent, or patrons, but to the Savior Who shed His precious blood to build His church. I once preached for the church that now tolerates error. In fact I worked with them in one capacity or another for more than half a

decade. This past weekend I had the opportunity to preach for that new church that walked away from error and, against the “advice” of their friends and family, started a faithful congregation of God’s people. My heart ached as I listened to the sad plight of that once faithful congregation, but I rejoiced in knowing that there are still “7,000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” Now meeting in the local high school, with determination and zeal, they are prepared to march forward for the cause of Christ. May their number increase.

Yes, beloved, there IS such a thing as Divinely sanctioned division.

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CONTRIBUTIONS

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Robert Price.....	\$200
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Jimmy Clark.....	\$10
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Contributions.....	\$855.00
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IN THE NEWS...

More From Oklahoma Christian University

Jerry Brewer of Elk City, Oklahoma writes... Here’s an interesting item from *Oklahoma Christian University website*. Seems they never heard a word about unsound preachers and practices that some have voiced in recent months. Especially note the following excerpts:

“Acappella’s 2001 tour had the group traveling in the northeast U.S. that fall, and God used Acappella to minister to people after the tragic events of September 11.”

Comment: God used...? How do they know that? Did God tell them? Did the Spirit “nudge” them? Did they see a vision of a man from New York saying, “Come over and help us?” Did an angel appear to them? Was that message communicated in a sheet let down from heaven? They need to let us know *how* they know “God used Acappella to minister to people after the tragic events of September 11.”

“Acappella contributed to Oklahoma City’s healing process following the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building on April 19, 1995. The group members, in town for a previously-scheduled concert nine days after the bombing, spent time downtown singing and ministering to rescue workers and other volunteers. Their concert at the Civic Center was switched from a ticketed to a free event, with a love offering taken to benefit Feed the Children’s Disaster Relief Fund.”

Now they’re bidding God speed to a denominational preacher (Larry Jones of Oklahoma City) who has made a large fortune with “Feed The Children.” Jones is a graduate of Oklahoma City University (a Methodist school) and is a denominational preacher. “Love offering?” More “Ashdodic” expressions for sure.

“Our main goals are to plant the seeds of the Gospel in hearts that haven’t heard yet, and to encourage and strengthen the Body of Christ in their faith,” said founder and producer Keith Lancaster.”

If these people “plant the seeds of the gospel” with their slick productions, instrumental music sounds made with their mouths and lyrics that do more for the toe than they do for the soul, then there isn’t a word of truth to Paul’s statement that, “*it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe*” (1 Cor. 1:21). And...I don’t believe Paul charged \$8 a head to “plant the seeds of the gospel.”

Face it. Oklahoma “Christian(?)” is another Bethany. Those of us who love the truth need to make it known far and wide that this school has no association with us — especially “their” claim that they are “associated with churches of Christ.” That was never true, and certainly isn’t the case today.

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General Baptist Doctrines...

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bors tell me where the word “church” ever refers to a denomination? Were Paul, Peter, James, John, the church in Corinth, the church in Ephesus, and the churches of Galatia affiliated with something bigger than a local congregation but smaller than the church universal?

My friends, the beast of denominationalism did not exist in the first century. It is a late-comer to history. In fact, denominations have only come into existence since the 1500s. Many individuals either do not know this, or, have chosen not to be honest with the facts of history. Peter and Paul and the other apostles knew nothing about a Baptist Church. Listen to that statement again. The apostles knew nothing about a Baptist Church. They only knew about one church (Eph. 4:4; 1:22-23). Their efforts were to go forth into the world and attempt to get individuals to become members of that one church.

A man I know that was once a member of the Baptist Church heard a gospel preacher state this same point that we are making. It infuriated him. He was so angry that he went home and began to read his Bible. He was going to prove that preacher wrong. He read and read and could not find the Baptist denomination in his own Bible. He read the entire New Testament and did not find it. What was he to do? He could just reject the truth, or, he could admit to the truth. He did the latter. His honesty led him out of that denomination. Today, he is a member of the church about which one can read in the pages of the New Testament.

THE BAPTIST MANUAL

A second general observation that one can make about the Baptist Church concerns its manual. The manual I have in my library is entitled, Baptist Church Manual, Revised by J. M. Pendleton. It is published by the Broadman Press in Nashville, Tennessee. It is a small book and contains only 182 pages. On page 43, the book states: “The following Declaration of Faith expresses, substantially, what Baptists believe

concerning the topics mentioned.”

The reason this manual exists is stated on page 42 of the book itself. We quote: “Different sects, professing to take the word of God as their guide, contend as earnestly for their distinctive views as if they had different Bibles. Various constructions are placed on the teachings of the sacred volume, and multitudes of passages are diversely interpreted ... As there is such a diversity of opinion in the religious world, it is eminently proper for those who appeal to the Scriptures as the fountain of truth to declare what they believe the Scriptures to teach. To say that they believe the Scriptures is to say nothing to the purpose. All will say this, and yet all differ as to the teachings of the Bible. There must be some distinctive declaration.” The Baptist Manual is the distinctive declaration of the Baptist Church.

The problem with the manual is three-fold. First, the God of heaven and earth never authorized a manual. The Scriptures are the only manual for the church. They are complete and all-sufficient. “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The Scriptures furnishes one completely. He does not need anything else. The Bible is the only rule of faith and practice for the church. If a manual exists and contains anything less than the Bible, it is not needed. It contains too little. If a manual exists and contains more than the Bible, it is not needed. It contains too much. If a manual exists and contains exactly what the Bible says, it is not needed. We already have the Bible.

The second reason it is wrong is because it erects an obstacle for the unity of believers. If one adheres to the creed book and the book contradicts the Bible, it is very difficult to get him to give up his creed. For one to be a Baptist, he must adhere to the creed of the Baptist Church. If the Bible contradicts the creed, one will either have to cease being a Baptist, or reject the Bible. This is an extremely difficult choice for many. If only the Bible existed, then one would not have to give up a creed; he would only have to read just his view

of the Scriptures. The creed book would not stand in his way of accepting the new truth learned.

The third reason the creed book is wrong is because it plainly contradicts God’s word. We will not have time in this lesson to prove this point, but we will make this the focus of another article.

THE NAME OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH

From whence does the name “Baptist” come? Some have said that it dates back to John the Baptist as being the beginning of the Baptist Church. Others have said that it springs from the concept that the Baptist church contends that one must be baptized in order to hold membership in the Baptist organization. The Baptist manual does not enlighten us. In fact, in every discussion of the church in the manual, the name “Baptist” is omitted. It was surprising to me that under the discussion of the church, they did not once mention the name “Baptist,” nor did they give a scripture reference for the name. Why is this the case? Are they not the church of the Bible?

Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, “...upon this church I will build my church...” Jesus is the builder. He gave his precious blood to purchase the church (Acts 20:28). He is the owner. He took the church to be His holy bride (Eph. 5:23-32). He is her husband. Since Jesus is the builder, owner and husband of the church, shouldn’t the church carry His name? Why would one want to attach the name of a man or a practice or a method upon the church? Such is degrading to the One who is the Head of the body, the church. It is His church. It is the church of Christ.

CONCLUSION

We urge all our readers to study these things in more detail, especially those who are members of the Baptist Church. If you have any questions, please contact us. We encourage you to keep studying. It is the only way we can be workmen who are pleasing to the heavenly Father (2 Tim. 2:15).

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WHY WE'VE ALREADY WON THE MUSIC WARS

Trevor Major

Conservatism, by definition, is slow to change. In fact, conservatives are downright stick-in-the-muds when it comes to certain core beliefs, and rightly so. Liberals, on the other hand, value change as the *sum-mum bonum* — the Supreme Good. The change they seek rarely comes from a fresh analysis of where the religious world might be going wrong with respect to God's word. Instead, it's all about keeping up with the Pastor Joneses. The latest fad down the road becomes the Next Big Thing for us too — with the Community Church movement being but the latest example.

History has not been kind to band-wagons, let alone what God might have to say on these matters. Our own innovators have tended to jump on board just as their denominational counterparts are fleeing like rats from a sinking ship. The Crossroads movement is a classic case in point.

The Community Church movement aims to make our worship services “seeker friendly.” We achieve that, so the market surveys and focus groups tell us, by adapting our worship forms and practices to people who are essentially “unchurched” and seeking a place to scratch their spiritual itches. This need will not be met, so we are told, if our visitors are expected to sing unfamiliar songs in four-part, *a cappella* harmony. Their postmodern, consumer-driven sensibilities must be served by solos (often sung by women), quartets, choirs and, most recently, bands playing full-out “contemporary Christian music” (often at a Saturday evening “alternate” worship service).

We know this is a bad idea. We have known it's a bad idea for a very long time. The music of the New Testament church was offered with the voice alone, and was something in which the entire congregation participated (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Despite rapid changes in the post-apostolic era, *a cappella* singing (meaning, literally, “of the chapel”) was the dominant form of sacred music up to and including the sixteenth century.

After enduring decades of ridicule from our religious neighbors (“Oh, you are the weirdos who don't use instruments”), and now our own brethren, there are denominationalists who are finally saying “Enough is enough.” Don't get me wrong: we are not about to witness a mass defection of Baptist music directors. What we are seeing, however, is considerable debate about the place of entertainment-oriented praise music. People are asking themselves, “Why can't I *participate* in worship by singing songs? Why do they have to be sung *for* and *to* me?” There is skepticism, also, about the value of making supposedly sacred music sound exactly like the current Top 40. It is one thing for *Creed* and *Evanescence* to sneak on to the pop charts with thinly-veiled spiritual messages; it is quite another matter to replace the music of the church with thinly-veiled spiritual messages.

This disagreement has risen to the level of cultural warfare. It has broken out all over the place. It is not merely academic. It is not a small skirmish here and there, or confined to one denomination or even one segment of “Christendom.” These battles have coalesced (merged) into what denominationalists are calling the Music Wars.

The most cause for concern has emerged among what might be considered “mainline” denominations. These groups have had a long history of compromise, and yet, there are those among their number who think that a certain threshold may have been crossed. They fear that too much of the spiritual and doctrinal store may have been given away in an effort to reach anyone and everyone from a population that knows, or cares, little about the denomination's traditions and “distinctives.”

Carl Schalk, a well-known professor of music in the Lutheran world, criticized “calls for a more pragmatic, consumer-oriented worship and church music” as being “more concerned with sociology and psychology than with theology” (*Christian Century*, March

21-28, 1990). He goes on to say that these changes in worship styles are not “theologically neutral.” In other words, the question of *how* we worship cannot be separated from the question of *Who* we worship.

Similar complaints are being heard among Catholics. Lucy Carroll observes that music in most parishes is straying away from “active participation” by all members. Further, the kind of music being employed just doesn't sound like it belongs in the Church. “If it sounds like a Broadway ballad,” she says, “it belongs on Broadway, not the altar. If it sounds like a ‘golden oldie’, sing it at home. If it stirs feelings of a non-sacred nature, it does not belong in a sacred place. If [it] sounds like a rock group or a mariachi band, then it may be fine for entertainment at the parish picnic or in the gym, but not at Mass, and not in the temple wherein the Sacrifice of Calvary is re-presented” (*Adoremus Bulletin*, 2003). Of course, we don't believe that the building itself is a sacred place, but we certainly believe that the people who meet there should be holy, and the way they conduct themselves before the Lord should be reverent in all respects.

Evangelicals also are struggling with contemporary musical forms and practices. In some ways, this is quite surprising. After all, Evangelicals have tended to shun ancient traditions and formal worship styles. Now, however, a few among their number are experiencing those very feelings of a “non-sacred nature” to which Carroll alluded. While watching a recent performance of an attractively dressed, handsome young woman, Steve Hutchens admits that her singing “had a different effect on me than I suspect she thought it would” (*Touchstone*, May 2004). The song brought him closer to Jesus, he thinks, but only by making him realize the sin of lust that was growing in his own heart. For conscience's sake he had to avert his eyes until she was finished. Hutchens, an Evangelical, recognizes that these performances are intended to reach the

people, but what about those who have been reached already? When do they stop being seekers and start growing up in Christ? He fears that the young woman “displaying herself before the faithful with her sexualized — and hence secularized — religion” symbolizes

...a faith in which the value of worship is measured principally in terms of its ability to excite the worshiper rather than give glory to God, and in which it is assumed that what satisfies the jaded church-attender, always seeking new and heightened religious experience, is what pleases the Lord. It is a faith in which the Scriptures are honored in word, but in which they have always been freely altered, distorted or ignored to meet the changing requirements of an unstable religious culture.

Admittedly this is all anecdotal evidence, but the very fact that denominationalists are wringing their hands over the nature of sacred music is reason enough to question the wisdom of certain trends in our own brotherhood. If the wheels are coming off the contemporary music bandwagon in the broader denominational world, then what makes us think that the church of

our Lord should jump on board for the ride?

Surely our own music styles and tastes have changed. On any given Sunday we may sing anything from Mosie Lister’s rousing “Where No One Stands Alone,” to the Gregorian “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.” No doubt, future editions of our song books will feature new hymns reflecting more contemporary music styles. We may incorporate new technology to raise our heads and our voices from the pages of our books to the open air of the assembly. But none of this need change the congregational, non-instrumental nature of the praise itself.

Those within the church who wish to implement secularized, entertainment-driven performances certainly have denominational numbers on their side. But they are fighting a losing battle. In their headlong rush to join the fray, they have failed to see the stream of deserters heading in the other direction. Disenchanted Catholics, Lutherans, Evangelicals and others have seen clearly that worship needs to be offered by *all* the people, and it needs to rise above the profane.

If we continue to emphasize the true purpose of praise in song, then we have won the Music Wars already. For conservatives, it has not been a matter of organs versus electric guitars, or traditional hymns versus rock songs, or the teachings of a denominational

leader versus the findings of a market-research firm. It has not even been about solos versus congregational singing, or instrumental accompaniment versus *a cappella*. Ultimately, the issue has been whether we were prepared to address God in the way that He wants to be addressed. From the offering of Cain to the strange fire of Nadab and Abihu to the divided communion of the Corinthian church, man has always found a way to satisfy his own needs. But as the saying goes, it’s *not* all about you, or me. Does it involve man? Of course. Does it produce spiritual growth in ourselves and those around us? One would hope so. But those are happy side effects of worship’s true purpose, which is to acknowledge God’s preeminence in all things (Jude 25). Do we pull this off to perfection in every congregation on every Lord’s day? Probably not. But if the struggle is to keep God front and center in our psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, then the church of our Lord is miles above the cultural trench warfare going on in the religious world below.

In fine conservative fashion, and for the church’s own good, it should stay right where it is, for congregational, a cappella singing is authorized in the Scriptures.

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DENOMINATIONALISM JUSTIFIES EXISTENCE BY THE BRANCHES OF JOHN 15:5. BUT WHAT ARE THE “BRANCHES?”

Dan Goddard

A certain, widely-held concept of the New Testament church is based upon a fallacy and fostered in ignorance.

In this article I trust prayerful consideration may be focused in three directions: 1) toward a sectarian fallacy; 2) toward a perversion used to sustain this fallacy; 3) toward a Bible parallel deadly to denominational churches.

Sectarian Bible students confidently affirm that modern denominations constitute the branches of Christ’s body. Consequently, they affirm that the sum total of all denominations equals the church universal. It is, therefore, common for one to hear

another speak of the Baptist branch of the church, the Methodist branch of the church, etc., etc.

Students of denominational theology suppose that John 15:5 sustains their concept of the New Testament church. In this verse, Jesus says, “I am the vine, ye are the branches...” For at least two reasons, it is certain that “branches” in this passage can have no reference to the denominations: 1) no modern denominations were in existence during the life of Christ, or, indeed, for some six hundred years after His death; 2) Christ makes it certain in John 15:6 that the “branches” are “men.” Consequently, “men,” or “Christians” are the branches of the

Spiritual Vine.

Sometimes it is admitted that men or Christians are the branches of the vine, but that different groups of Christians or branches constitute the denominations or larger limbs or “clusters.”

If this be true, denominational preachers should clarify their phraseology and call the denominations “clusters” of the church, instead of “branches” of the church. And besides, the denominational concept of John 15:5 makes the passages picture a vine bearing clusters of different kinds of fruit. And who ever heard of a fruit tree bearing a cluster of apples and a cluster of peaches, both neighbors on the

same limb?

In Paul's day the church at Corinth was divided four ways: there were Paulites, Apollosites, Cephasites, and Christians. Doubtless, each of the first three of those groups claimed its people were Christians. But no doubt each group affirmed that its people were Christians of a certain kind. Paul rebuked that sort of Christianity, and reminded the Corinthians that Christ is not divided (1 Cor. 1:10-13).

A perfect parallel exists between

the condition of the Corinthian church and modern denominationalism. The only difference is a difference of magnitude: we must say with deep regret that the Corinthian attitude has become world-wide, and that the Paulites, Apollosites, and Cephasites, have become, in a figure, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, etc., etc.

Today, Christendom, so-called, is divided into multitudes of sects which are recognized by human titles. Doubtless, each of these religious groups

claims its people are Christians, basically. But each group affirms that its people are Christians of a certain kind.

As Paul rebuked the Corinthians, so he would rebuke denominational people today. And he would remind them that Christ is not divided; that we should all be of Christ, just Christians, nothing more, nothing less.

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UNITED IN CHRIST

John D. Cotham

A grave responsibility of Christians is to cooperate with other Christians. Man is usually a helpless creature when alone. God did not endow us with the same natural instincts and abilities as He did the animal kingdom. For this reason man usually learns to depend upon and to trust others for help. Men seldom fight wars alone. Even the bully is quiet when he doesn't have his cronies to back him up. There is strength in numbers. Solomon said, *"Two are better than one"* (Eccl. 4:9). Ben Franklin said, *"Let us stand united; for divided we shall fall,"* but it was Jesus who said, *"And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand"* (Mark 3:25).

God has instituted a union or fellowship that gives the Christian a place of safety, comfort and strength. It is called the church. In order for the church to remain strong, it requires the cooperation of all its members. One of the first problems Paul dealt with at Corinth was their division, *"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment"* (1 Cor. 1:10). The church at Corinth was ineffective because of division.

Paul teaches cooperative work by using the human body as an illustration, *"For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye,*

I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?... And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.... Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1 Cor. 12:14-27).

Some members don't cooperate because they have the wrong disposition. In Paul's illustration of the body's members, the foot underestimates its value because it is not the hand (v.15). The ear has the same problem because it doesn't have the job of the eye. These kind of members don't do anything because they either waste their time wishing they were as talented as another; or, are jealous because they think someone else is going to get more glory than they will. On the other hand, some have an opposite disposition. These think they have no need for anyone else because they think they are so much better than all other members (v.21).

Paul says each member should supply its part, *"From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love"* (Eph. 4:16). This illustration teaches both individual and cooperative activities for the good of the whole ("whole body fitly joined together" and "every joint supplieth" and "maketh increase of the body"). The functions of the various parts of the

human body brings to mind a story of a blind man and a cripple man who wanted to go to a certain place: The crippled man climbed onto the strong back of the blind man and started their journey. The blind man did the walking, and the cripple man did the seeing. Through cooperation, they both got to their destination.

Solomon teaches the wisdom of cooperation by referring to the locust, *"The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands"* (Prov. 30:27). Man has hardly seen any more destructive insect than the locust, all because they work so well together. God's people should be banded together with such force upon the world. If we did, billions more could hear the Gospel of Christ.

The first place God's people must be united is in His Word. Paul began to handle the division of the Corinthians by first reminding them to be united in teaching, mind and judgment, *"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment"* (1 Cor. 1:10). What they were to speak was the pure word of God.

God's people are to walk by the same rule (Phil. 3:16). We are to *"earnestly contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints"* (Jude 3, ASV). There cannot be a right union nor proper cooperation without strict adherence to God's word.

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Seek The Old Paths is a monthly publication of the **East End Church of Christ** and is under the oversight of its elders. It is mailed **FREE** upon request. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3; II Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:13; Titus 2:1; II Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless otherwise noted. Articles are also welcomed.

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