

Holding Hands With Denominations

In the RELIGION section of the “Times Daily” published in Florence, Alabama, September 25, 1993, there appeared an article, (almost full-page, pictures and all) reporting a combined service of the North Wood United Methodist Church and the Magnolia Church of Christ. The two groups had met for a “joint celebration of worship” the previous Sunday night with about 500 members present. Note these are quotes from the sermon of Joe VanDyke, preacher of the Magnolia Church of Christ, as reported in the press. Read it and weep!

“We’re not here together to say that we agree on everything there is to discuss. We’re here to say that there’s something greater that we share in common than anything that would divide us.” ... “We’re on a journey together. The church of Christ is not on a journey by itself. Neither is the Methodist. One of the strange things about being on a journey with God - when you link yourself with God - he chooses those who will travel with you. We’d like to pick our fellow travelers, but God tells us he will do the choosing.” Indeed! The Scriptures teach, “*Can two walk together except they be agreed?*” (Amos 3:3).

VanDyke also preached about Paul’s message in Ephesians 4 and said, “It seems that Paul was telling us there are things of great importance and things of lesser importance, and if you want to talk about preserving the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, you’ll have to put yourself in override and come over some of those differences and focus on those things that you have in common.” Please note what Paul actually said in Ephesians 4! Paul said that there is *one God, Christ, Spirit, faith, baptism, body, and hope*. ONE OF EACH! There is agreement between the church of Christ and the Methodist church on only three of the seven! We preach different doctrines; therefore not “*the faith*”. We practice different baptisms; we are not of the same body; and therefore, we don’t have the same hope!

The newspaper further reported, “The organ was played during singing of half of the hymns, and the other half were sung without musical accompaniment, in respect to the traditions of the denominations.” Is indeed, the Lord’s church nothing more than a group of people practicing the traditions of their denomination? We sing because the New Testament teaches to sing as an acceptable form of worship (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). Yet, has the church we read about in the Bible been reduced to nothing more than a denomination practicing its traditions? If our practice is nothing more than traditions, why have the organ playing during half the hymns? Why not play during all of the hymns? After all, those who attended this event believe that “doctrine doesn’t matter” anyway.

VanDyke quoted Jesus, “*By this will all men know that you are my disciples, by the love you have one for another.*” Though this is true, the Lord also said, “*If you love me, keep my commandments*” (John 14:15).

More recently in the Huntsville Times, (1-15-00) an article by the Religion Editor, entitled “Christians Smashing Barriers in Year of the Jubilee,” reports more disturbing news. Note the following quotes:

“Where will you find a Catholic priest speaking in a Baptist church with music being performed by Seventh-day Adventists and members of a Church of Christ?” ... “First Baptist Church of Huntsville will host the Christian Jubilee service. It will feature music from various local choirs, including the Oakwood College Aeolians, the First Baptist choir, the Twickenham Church of Christ Praise Team, and an orchestra and children’s choir made up of musicians from area congregations.”... “The Twickenham Church of Christ Praise Team, directed by James Kendrick, will perform several selections.”

What are we thinking about, brethren? While those denominational people may see the need for unity, they don’t understand the Lord’s prayer of John 17. Jesus prayed *“Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, AS WE ARE.”* Read John 17:20-21. Were there any doctrinal barriers between God and Christ? The unity Jesus prayed for was the same unity the apostles demanded. Paul taught, *“Now I beseech you, brethren, through 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 perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment”* (I Corinthians 1:10). *“Only, whereunto we have attained, by that same (rule) let us walk”* (Philippians 3:16). Peter wrote, *“If any man speaketh, (speaking) as it were oracles of God; if any man ministereth, (ministering) as of the strength which God supplieth: that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, whose is the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen”* (I Peter 4:11). Does this sound like unity in diversity or agreeing to disagree agreeably?

Let us read the sacred writings, *“and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them”* (Ephesians 5:11). John warned, *“Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into (your) house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works”* (II John 9-11).

Perhaps in our efforts to appeal to the world, we have advertised where we meet, but we have failed to adequately inform them where we stand. Maybe the world around us knows who we are, but they do not understand what we are or why we are. Why is this true? Can it be that the world does not see the difference between the Lord’s church and the denominational world, because we have been holding hands with denominationalism? If new converts are not thoroughly taught the truth, we may find that they have just become members of another denomination. Let us beware, lest a noble and distinctive plea of , *“no book but the Bible, no creed but Christ, no way but His way, no church but His church”* be lost by apostasy.