

# WHY WE CAN HAVE NO FELLOWSHIP WITH DENOMINATIONS

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## INTRODUCTION

1. The subject of FELLOWSHIP has been an important issue for the twentieth century.
2. The Ecumenical Movement of Protestant denominationalism has had a great impact on denominations.
  - a. J. Marcellus Kik said in 1957, "*The rising tide of Ecumenism may in a few generations engulf a number of historic denominations.*" (from his book, Ecumenism and the Evangelical, page 1.
  - b. Bill J. Humble said in 1953, "*Though the ecumenical movement may become increasingly influential in American Protestantism, it will never become a problem to the church of Christ unless our membership succumbs to the "anti-legalistic" modernism which dishonors Christ by discarding the New Testament. And when that occurs, we are lost.*" (The Preceptor, Dec. 1953).
3. Denominations have come to accept one another as "Christians" with different denominational heritages. . .
4. They practice "unity-in-diversity".
  - a. They fellowship everyone who calls themselves "Christians", it matters not what they believe.
  - b. They say "doctrine" does not matter.
  - c. CHRIST, our SPOKESMAN TODAY (Heb. 1:2; Matt. 17:5), says DOCTRINE DOES MATTER!
    - i. "*Charge some that they teach no other doctrine*" – I Tim. 1:3; Rom. 16:17; Gal. 1: 6 – 9.
    - ii. "*Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God*" – 2 John 9.
    - iii. We are to speak "*sound doctrine*" – Tit. 2:1.
    - iv. I Pet. 4:11.
  - d. The "UNITY-IN-DIVERSITY" movement in the institutional churches is moving a significant number of liberal churches of Christ into the mainstream of Protestant Denominationalism.
  - e. These churches recognize those in denominationalism who "profess faith in Christ" as Christians, even though they have not been baptized for the remission of their sins – Acts 2:38.
  - f. On the basis of Romans 14 and 15, it is argued that we can have unity and fellowship with denominations IN SPITE of our important DOCTRINAL and MORAL differences. . .(Mike Cope).
  - g. We have lived to see Anti-Legalistic Modernism in churches of Christ.
  - h. Let us now look at some reasons why children of God CANNOT have fellowship with denominations.

## I. THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS NOT A DENOMINATION

- a. The word “church” means “the called-out” – All who have been called by the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14) have been added to the church (Acts 2:47).
- b. They have been added to Christ’s church – He BUILT but ONE (Matt. 16:18); He BOUGHT but ONE (Eph. 5:25; Acts 20:28).
- c. It had its BEGINNING on the first PENTECOST after the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2; Acts 2: 41, 47).
  - i. It includes ALL the SAVED.
  - ii. The word “denomination” suggests a fraction or part of the whole; no denomination claims to be the WHOLE OF THE SAVED.
- d. The New Testament reveals NOTHING about denominationalism; all denominations exist WITHOUT the AUTHORITY of Christ – Col. 3:17.
- e. Since the church that Jesus built is NOT a denomination, Christians must OPPOSE DENOMINATIONALISM. . .
- f. To fellowship denominations is to GO BEYOND THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST and give Godspeed to their error, and become a partner of their evil deeds (2 John 9 – 11; Eph. 5:11).
- g. To FELLOWSHIP DENOMINATIONS is to say by one’s actions:
  - i. That it is alright to preach and practice:
    - 1. The doctrine that “faith only” saves – James 2:24.
    - 2. That baptism is not essential to salvation – Mark 16:16.
    - 3. That instrumental music is alright in worship to God – Eph. 5:19.
    - 4. That “doctrine” does not matter.
    - 5. That one cannot “fall from grace” – Gal. 5: 4.
    - 6. That you don’t have to eat the Lord’s Supper on each Lord’s Day – Acts 20:7.

**II. WE CANNOT FELLOWSHIP PEOPLE IN DENOMINATIONALISM BECAUSE THEY HAVE NOT OBEYED THE GOSPEL.**

- a. The New Testament teaches one becomes a Christian when he obeys the gospel – 2 Thess. 1:9; Rom. 1:16.
- b. In obedience to the gospel one must:
  - i. Be taught – Matt. 28:19.
  - ii. Believe – Mk. 16:16.
  - iii. Repent – Acts 2:38.
  - iv. Confess Christ – Acts 8:37.
  - v. Be Baptized for the remission of sins – Acts 2:38; Mk. 16:16; I Pet. 3:21.
- c. When one is Baptized, his spiritual state changes:
  - i. He is no longer an alien sinner; he has become a fellow-citizen with the saints in the kingdom of God – Eph. 2:19; Col. 1:13.
  - ii. He is no longer outside of Christ, without hope; he is now IN CHRIST with hope – Eph. 2:12; Gal. 3:27.
  - iii. He is no longer an unbeliever; he is NOW a believer – Mk. 16:16.
  - iv. He is no longer without spiritual blessings; he now has ALL spiritual blessings in Christ – Eph. 1:3.

- d. Denominational people are still in a state of their alien sins; they are NOT Christians – they have rejected God’s plan of salvation.

**III. WE CANNOT FELLOWSHIP PEOPLE IN DENOMINATIONALISM BECAUSE UNAUTHORIZED WORSHIP AFFECTS ONE’S SALVATION.**

- a. Worship based upon the commandments of men is VAIN – Matt. 15:9.
- b. God rejects worship that is not offered “*by faith*” . . .
  - i. He rejected the worship of Cain – Gen. 4:3 – 5; Heb. 11:4; I John 3: 11, 12
    - 1. It was not offered “*by faith*” – Heb. 11:4.
  - ii. He rejected the worship of Nadab and Abihu—Lev. 10: 1 – 2.
    - 1. It was worship “*He commanded them not*” . . .
    - 2. He had commanded – Lev. 16:12.
    - 3. The Lord took their lives – Lev. 10:2.
- c. There is a DIVINE PATTERN of Worship – John 4:24.
  - i. GIVING on the first day of the week – I Cor. 16:1, 2.
  - ii. Weekly observance of the LORD’S SUPPER on the first day of the week – Acts 20:7.
  - iii. PRAYER – Acts 2:42.
  - iv. Congregational SINGING – Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19.
  - v. PREACHING of the Apostolic Doctrine – Acts 2:42; 20:7.
- d. The denominations have departed from the worship of the New Testament:
  - i. Instead of congregational singing, they use choirs, singing groups that entertain, trios, quartets; their singing is accompanied by mechanical instruments of music.
  - ii. They have “theatrical performances”; clapping for performers.
  - iii. The Lord’s supper is not observed on the first day of every week.
  - iv. Contributions are taken at every service.
  - v. The preaching is filled with false doctrine.

**IV. WE CANNOT FELLOWSHIP PEOPLE IN DENOMINATIONS BECAUSE THE DOCTRINES OF MEN AFFECT ONE’S SALAVATION.**

- a. Paul told Timothy to “*charge some that they teach no other doctrine*” – I Tim. 1:3.
- b. John said we are NOT to give Godspeed to men who do not bring the doctrine of Christ – 2 John 9 – 11.
- c. The Apostles were to teach “*all things*” commanded of Christ – Matt. 28:20.
- d. Paul warns about men who pervert the gospel – Gal. 1: 7 – 9.
- e. Those in denominations do NOT teach the doctrine of Christ with reference to:
  - i. The church
  - ii. The plan of salvation
  - iii. Baptism
  - iv. The kind of music in worship
  - v. The frequency of the Lord’s Supper
  - vi. The wearing of human names

- vii. Giving men titles, such as Father, Reverend, and Doctor . . .
- viii. They have departed from the faith in so many areas of doctrine.

## **CONCLUSION**

To fellowship those in denominations one must give up his belief in what the Bible teaches:

- a. That water baptism is essential for salvation – I Pet. 3:21; Mk. 16:16.
- b. The pattern of New Testament worship – John 4:24.
- c. What the Bible teaches concerning the work of the church.

One cannot maintain the purity of faith, and extend fellowship to those who deny “*the faith once for all delivered to the saints*” – Jude 3.