

Multi-Denominationalism

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There are some who are promoting the idea of “multi-denominationalism.” There is indeed great merit in the idea but, as we shall see, there are also inherent dangers. Consider:

- The Catholic “church,” the first denomination, was built, however imperfectly, on the idea of the one and only body of Christ and the unity of the one faith given once for all. (Jude 3, etc.) But the Catholic (“universal”) sect was hardly the only group in existence and they forced others into obedience to their ideas, even devolving to the point of killing those who would not conform – concepts and practices completely condemned by Christ. (Mt. 20:25-26, etc.) The Catholic sect received the approval of the Roman empire and, because it was now unequally joined to a worldly, Satanically dominated entity, became something it had never been before. In becoming “Mother Church,” the Catholic sect created alongside the bride of Christ the Great Prostitute Babylon who is the mother of abominations. (Rev. 17:5) Christ certainly continued to build His ekklesia (as He had promised – Mt. 16:18) but His kingdom more resembles a fishing net constructed one section at a time as He tied together His net in knots of two and three strands (Mt. 13:47, 18:20) even as men persisted in building their own tiny sand castles in His name. The Catholic sect simply set aside many things of the real way of following Christ and incorporated many abominable, demonic deceptions and called it all “truth.”

- The sixteenth century reformation spearheaded largely by Martin Luther was ignited when the Lord gave Luther the revelation regarding justification by faith. (Rom. 1:17, etc.) Later on, however, Luther refused to join with other like-minded reformers and ended his days a demonically-dominated old man. His followers went on to become Lutherans and formed a separate division among themselves. Similarly, the followers of John Calvin (another sixteenth century reformer) aligned themselves into a separate sect and particularly opposed the Arminiasts because they held differing opinions about eternal security.

- About the same time, the Anglicans broke away from the Catholic sect but not because of any particular revelation given by God. King Henry wanted to divorce his wife but could not get permission from the pope so he declared himself the head of the Anglican “church” and got himself divorced. What we can learn from this, though, is that men who have carnal motives are quite able to organize their own “church” so as to continue on in their sin.

- Then came the Baptists who were given the revelation of the importance of water baptism as a sign of repentance. (Acts 2:38, etc.) The Baptists were, of course, persecuted by Catholics, Anglicans and Lutherans alike and were forced to withdraw into their own circle. These too became a hardened old wineskin and devolved into their own sect.

- Then came the revelation God gave to John Wesley and the Methodists of the need for sanctification by faith. (Acts 26:18, etc.) The Wesleyan revivals that drew in thousands to salvation and a deeper experience of Christ became a thing of the past and the movement became yet another hardened wineskin.

- Then came the revelation that the Adventists received that there would be a second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 1:11, etc.) These have been a sect to themselves almost from the beginning because they also took up other legalisms involving things like the Sabbath and particular dress requirements.

- Then came the Finney and Moody revivals with the idea that believers should be baptized with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 19:6, etc.) As much good as these did, they too pushed people into “churches” that became “Pentecostal” and these were avoided and shunned by all the other previously formed sects.

- Following those revivals were the so-called Pentecostal revivals (Azusa St., etc.) that restored the concept of the gifts of the Holy Spirit as being for believers today. (1 Cor. 12:28, etc.) This was viewed as too controversial in many of the previously-formed sects and the Pentecostals settled into their own denomination (sect, division, heresy) and came to see themselves (as did every other sect) as the sole possessors of “the whole counsel of God.”

- More recently has come the revelation that there should be apostles and prophets involved in building the body of Christ. This movement, in spite of its many abuses, is rightly based on recognizing *all* of the giftings or gracings, that is, the apostles, prophets, heralds, shepherds and teachers. (Eph. 4:11) Though many went on to place too much weight on just what each gifting was supposed to be, the real error was to continue to see the gifting as a titled office or position rather than as a means of exposing younger, less experienced believers to God’s grace (mercy *and* power) by which they could become self-replicating disciples of Christ and not just some man’s “church” congregation.

- The last and final reformation of genuine believers will be about a complete restoration of not only all the truths that have been misplaced or lost over the centuries but also a renewal of life in Christ as was seen in the first apostles and disciples and this will certainly include signs and wonders, great persecution and bold proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom. In short, this renewal will and must be a return to our first love – Christ Himself.

All these truths as restored by God to His people must be amalgamated and embraced in order for multi-denominationalism to have any real spiritual value. But what equally must not be overlooked is that the simple restoration of truths is not enough for our day – any more than was the first reformation a complete work by restoring the truth of justification by faith. The original Catholic sect incorporated practices that are simply and deceptively antagonistic to spiritual life in Christ – practices far too effective and sophisticated to be anything but demonic. (1 Tim. 4:1) These practices have been retained within each of the denominations that have been formed over

the years. As each denomination formed into its own separate sect and hardened into an old wineskin, they simply became the daughters of their mother. (Again see Rev. 17:5) This does not negate the truth that was given by God at each stage of development but it does show how Satan and the demonic have resisted all forms of what is derided now in certain circles as “restorationist theology.” And it clearly shows the dual streams of power that have attended all revivals, renewals and moves of God. **Every** move of God, **every** revival, **every** outpouring of His Spirit has devolved into a schism (Greek *schisma* [4978]), sect or heresy (*hairesis* [139]), a dissension (*dichostasia* [1370]), and/or a contention (*eris* [2054]), etc. – and usually as the expression for someone’s incomplete or twisted version of “the faith.” And each of these things are contrary to the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:25) and keep us from experiencing and inheriting the kingdom of God. (Gal. 5:20-21)

These practices are so subliminally and subconsciously engrained and programmed into most believer’s thinking that there is simply no possibility of dislodging these deceptions. It is often even virtually impossible to speak about the deceptions because both sides of the argument use the same word. Of course, the arguments against the word “church” are never addressed at “church” and even when the truth is presented to a “church”-ite, most are so spiritually numb or dead that they cannot see it, even when it is plainly presented to them.

Yet it is true that the word “church” has several meanings that simply are not appropriate for the Greek word it translates. The English word “church” is used to translate the Greek word *ekklesia* [1577], a word which refers **only** to people, specifically those people called out of the darkness of this world in order to attend to Christ’s kingdom of light. The word “church,” as can be found in any worthwhile dictionary, refers to the “Christian” 1) building, 2) clergy, 3) religion, and, finally, 4) people. The contrast between “church” and *ekklesia* is presented very well in this discrepancy – three parts deception with one part truth. And, if we can at the least see this linguistic discrepancy, it gives us a basis to begin to differentiate and communicate about what was originally in the New Testament and what was added by the Catholic sect and by human tradition and demonic deception over the centuries. We can use *ekklesia* for the original and “church” for any add-ons or corruptions.

There are many “church” practices that simply have no place in the New Testament. Yet many of them stand as a very centerpiece and core symbol of “Christianity.” Consider:

- The pulpit cannot be found anywhere whatsoever in the New Testament yet it literally stands front and center in almost every assembly of “Christians” around the world. This piece of furniture was imported from the pagan temples of Rome and Greece when Constantine in the fourth century began funding and building temples for the “Christians.” As a deception given such central and lofty position, it stands as the symbol of the “church’s” Babylonian affiliation and captivity and it provides a place where the demonic can readily drown out every truth spoken from behind it.

- The “church” building cannot be found anywhere whatsoever in the New Testament either. That the Most High God had no need of such things was clearly a part of early apostolic teaching (Acts 7:48, 17:24) as was the concept that we, the people who had been born again, were now God’s building and temple, His spiritual house. (1 Cor. 3:9, 17, 2 Pet. 2:5, etc.) The oldest known “church” building was a converted house (converted to house the liturgy and

accommodate the clergy/laity distinction, that is) that was in use around 200 A.D., some 170 years after Christ was resurrected. The notion that the “church” building is “the house of God” is simply a deceptive distortion.

- Pews likewise have no place in the New Testament. They reinforce the notions that the “pastor” in the pulpit is an exalted specimen of spirituality and he is the man responsible for doing “the work of the ministry” (Eph. 4:12) and that, so long as we financially support his work and attend his “church,” we have done our part. The pews also defeat the priesthood of every believer and promote a passivity that is the breeding ground of demonic activity. Jesus said for us to go and make disciples (Mt. 28:19) but the “church” lures in passive pew potatoes whom they try to get to become “believers.” This is only make believe churchianity at its worst.

- Regularly scheduled meetings cannot be found anywhere in the New Testament either. There are those who would rely on the observation that the disciples met “on the first day of the week” (Acts 20:7) – the only time any such observation is made in connection with assembly (see also 1 Cor. 16:2 where Paul instructs those who wanted to contribute to his relief fund for Jewish believers to set money aside “on the first day of the week [so] that there be no collections when I come.” This is presumed to indicate regular meetings but is not necessarily so.) Those who would rely on these two passages have much to overcome. First, this is the same time period when Jesus said that “men slept” (Mt. 13:25, etc.) and, second, the occasion which Paul met with the disciples who met on the first day of the week is also the *only* time when Paul begins to sermonize – he speaks on and on until after midnight until a young man falls out of the window and is taken up several floors below as dead. (Acts 20:9) This occasion can be interpreted as much as a warning against regularly preaching down to a passive audience as it can be used as “proof” that the earliest disciples met on the first day of the week!

- There simply is no clergy/laity distinction to be found in the New Testament. Lording over is clearly condemned (Mk. 10:42-43, etc.) and Peter clearly says, “The elders which are among you I exhort... Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers... [not] as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock.” (1 Pet. 5:1-3) The Greek word rendered “heritage” here refers to the people, *all* the people, the whole flock. Yet within two centuries, particularly in the writings of Tertulian, this word *kleros* [2819] became the basis of the Latin word that became our English word “clergy.” Thus, now the clergy are more highly prized than the people. This is simply deception of a high order.

- The “pastor” as CEO over a corporation simply cannot be found anywhere in the New Testament. The evolution of this deception begins when Paul prophesied, “From among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” (Acts 20:30) This is

precisely what happened. Paul was speaking to the Ephesian elders (Greek *presbuteros* [4245]) and it was from the ranks of the elders that the “bishops” (Greek *episkopos* [1984], overseers), perhaps because they came to control how and where the money was spent, rose in power over the elders and the assemblies. They spoke various corruptions of the truth and drew followers after themselves and thus early church history is filled with the names of the bishop the people followed: Novationists, Montanists, Marcionites, etc. (see 1 Cor. 3:4 for the earliest recorded instance of this very human carnal tendency – and then keep in mind that carnality is enmity against God. See Rom. 8:7)

- The whole of the New Testament is viewed from a false perspective, the “church” paradigm. This turns leadership roles into positions rather than functions and lost is the simple fact that the whole must be viewed through the focal lens of love rather than the lens of human tradition. So long as the average believer is excused from responsibility and service and the exalted leader is given undue preeminence, the abominations will continue.

- Tithes and offerings are equally absent from the New Testament – any “church” teaching must reach into the Old Testament and either distort the meaning or place the “church” leadership back into an Old Testament position so as to justify their usual method of taking in money. The book of Acts supplies many minute details regarding the work of an apostle and the early disciples – but the one subject which from a human standpoint is of paramount importance in the carrying on of any work is not dealt with at all! God requires all who would take up leadership roles (that are designed to equip the saints so that they can do the work of the ministry) to live by faith in Him. Period.

What we should take away from all this is that we can indeed embrace all the truths that the Lord has restored in the various movements over the centuries but we must be careful not to become yet another hardened wineskin formed around some peculiar doctrine or practice. And even above all this, we must take care that we do not perpetuate the practices of the Great Prostitute Babylon which were foolishly incorporated by the Catholic “church” and perpetuated throughout all of church history in the various daughter denominations. Nothing – *absolutely nothing* – of either Babylon or Egypt will be welcome in the New Jerusalem. The finished work of Christ on the cross included nothing from either of these two very religious places and no such defilements will ever be included in any real expression of following Him. Anything that cannot be found anywhere in the New Testament, God’s “manifesto” (His intentions, agendas and methods) for His kingdom, has no true place in His precious promises regarding genuine life and godliness in Christ Jesus (2 Pet. 1:3) and will instead only be something of the flesh or religious idolatry that must be left behind so that we might truly be His sons and daughters. (2 Cor. 6:17-7:1)

Jesus said that He brought abundant life for His followers – not abundant religion. (Jn. 10:10) James wrote, “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” (Jas. 1:27) Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have

loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (Jn. 13:34-35)

We must remove our dark glasses (the “church” paradigm) and see again the pure light of Christ. We must forsake all the elements of darkness that have been designed to keep us from being the sons of the kingdom of God. It is most instructive to realize that Christ never used the word “church.” Aside from it being an English word (which completely precludes any possibility that Christ ever used it!), the Greek word it translates is not likely to have been used by Jesus either. It was a Greek word – Jesus was sent “only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mt. 15:24) – and Greek studies were simply not likely to be on His list of studies! It is much more likely that Matthew, writing much later when the usage of the Greek word *ekklesia* was more prevalent and, in tune with the understanding that the people were the temple and body of Christ and God, simply inserted the Greek word into Jesus’ teachings.

Since Jesus didn’t talk about what we call the “church” today, what did He talk about? The kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is that realm where Christ and God are the literal and actual King. Even among men today, this is how the kingdom comes into our midst – we obey Him however He leads and directs. But we must notice too that we cannot initiate or simply install the kingdom of God – we can only bring the kingdom of God into our midst by hearing and obeying God. (Mt. 6:10)

As far back as the 1960s, in what came to be known as his “valedictorian address” because it was written shortly before his death, A.W. Tozer wrote about the waning authority of Christ in the “churches.” Tozer clearly recognized that Christ the nominal but not literal “Head of the Church is respectfully silent while the real rulers take over.” (*God Tells the Man Who Cares*, “The Waning Authority of Christ in the Churches,” p. 210) Fifty years has not – as surely as two thousand years of “church” deception have not – improved the overall situation. We must take care that we are not perpetuators of the apostasy, the “church,” the great falling away from the faith that occurs before Christ’s return (2 Ths. 2:3), and we must take care that we are truly members of His genuine *ekklesia*. This is the difference between a wheat and a tare. The wheat, because it is a genuine crop, is weighed down with the weight of its fruit when it is ready to harvest – symbolic of genuine humility and productiveness. The tare, because it is a bastard weed – truly a son of the devil (Mt. 13:38) – stands proudly erect with its worthless head of seed waving about in the winds of deceptive “doctrines.” (also see Eph. 4:14) The time to choose which we will be – wheat or tare – is now. If we would be genuine wheat, we must submit our “doctrinal” and “theological” knowledge back to God so that He can restore to us what is completely truth, remove from us what is completely error and purify and clarify what is some contaminated and corrupted mixture of the two. Only in this way will we truly walk only in light and truth and be the sons of God who shine in the kingdom of our Father. (Mt. 13:43)

Let he who has ears hear.

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