

THE REAL PROBLEM WITH DENOMINATIONALISM

It is obvious that when denominationalism is studied, one finds that it is division within what is supposed to be in unity (John 17:20-21; I Cor. 1:10). One finds it includes a number of bodies, in direct contradiction to the clear Bible statements, "There is one body" and "But now are they many members, yet but one body" (Eph. 4:4; I Cor. 12:20). One also finds a number of faiths, but the Bible also says that there is "one faith" (Eph. 4:5) and that one must "earnestly contend for **the faith**" (Jude 3, emphasis mine, RCO). The list of the problems of denominationalism could go on and on. However there is just one main problem with the whole thing.

Denominationalism is not found in the pages of the New Testament! That's the problem! When Jude said that we were to "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3), that indicates that everything that has anything to do with Christianity is found in "the faith". The apostle Paul stated in reference to the gospel of Christ, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17). If the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel and denominationalism is not found in the gospel, then of necessity, denominationalism is not a part of the righteousness of God.

Though many shun and mock the idea of what some call "pattern theology", which is simply that the Bible, specifically the New Testament when it comes to this Christian age, is the pattern or blueprint of what God would have us to be; yet the Bible clearly teaches us that it is just that, our pattern. The Hebrew writer pointed to the admonition given to Moses when he was about to build the tabernacle, saying, "See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount" (Heb. 8:5). If anything, (in this case denominationalism) is not found in the pages of the New Testament, then it is not a part of the pattern that God gave for Christianity.

To the Colossians, Paul wrote, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:17). One simply must have authority (that is what being done in the name of the Lord means) for all that they do in the realm of Christianity. Since denominationalism is not found in the gospel of Christ, it is not done in the name of the Lord or in other words not authorized by the Lord.

DON'T BE LEFT IN THE DARK

An old great uncle used to make the little joke: "Where was Moses when the lights went out? In the dark". Many years went by before I ever questioned, when was it that the lights went out and Moses was in the dark? I finally decided he was probably talking about the ninth plague upon Egypt. The Lord told Moses, "Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt" (Exodus 10:22). But, then I realized that if that was what he was talking about, he was in error. Moses was not in the dark! Beginning with the fourth plague, the plague of flies, God said, "And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there" (Exodus 8:22). Concerning the darkness, the Bible says that there was "darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: Then saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings" (Exodus 10:22-23). The moral of this story is: those who are serving the Lord are not left in the dark!

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). Later, He said, "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness" (John 12:46). The apostle John wrote, "that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (I John 1:5). Paul said that the Lord sent him to the Gentiles, "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:18). Paul wrote the Corinthians saying, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. 4:6).

The Lord calls us out of darkness. Peter wrote, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (I Pet. 2:9). Like Egypt, we have been in the dark; "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord" (Eph. 5:8). Therefore it is required of us to continue to walk in the light (Eph. 5:8; I John 1:7). Moses was not left in the dark and neither do you and I have to be!

Robert