

How sternly we message believers have spoken against the sects around us who have built their walls of separation. And rightly so, because sectarianism is a sin God hates and has sworn to destroy. In the dictionary the word "sectarian" means "narrow mindedly putting the religious beliefs of ones sect ahead of more general and important basic truths."

As we look at the systems around us, we see many examples of this narrow mindedness. For instance, baptism in water stressed above the more important basic truth of a changed heart, which baptism should only follow after the changed heart.

Now suppose for a moment that we could be lifted up out of our Message church, and turn and look back on it, seeing it as do other outsiders. Perhaps some of us would be shocked to see ourselves through their eyes. Let us now take such a look as we apply the definition of denominationalism to our own churches. Hear again the meaning of the word "to narrow mindedly put the beliefs of ones sect above more important and basic truths." Could this possibly be said

A MESSAGE TO THE BRIDE

"Denominationalism"

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of some of us? Have we dared to put belief in our prophet ahead of the more important and basic truth of salvation through Jesus Christ?

From our vantage point outside the Message, and looking into it as do outsiders, can we see that some of us, who plead for undenominational Christianity, have ourselves fallen victim to a sectarian spirit? While coming against this spirit head-on in the denominational, we have unsuspectingly left our own flanks unguarded. In some instances, we have become one of the most tightly knit denominations in the world.

It happened as we demanded belief in our prophet before we would extend a true and loving hand of fellowship to those around us. How beautiful was Brother William Branham's plea that we return to New Testament Christianity. His God given

Message was, let us be Christians only, laying aside our church brand names (even the name Branham Tabernacle). Lay aside human philosophies and creeds and embrace the Christ of the Word. Let Scripture be our only authority and the name of the Savior be the only name we bear.

Unfortunately, we now bear the name "Branhamites" in many areas. Though we dislike their terminology, the name came not without cause. If our message has been demanding belief in a prophet ahead of belief in Christ, then we should not be surprised that it has fallen on deaf ears, and that they have so named us. If our message has been prophet-centered, we would do well to remember that the number one doctrine of the Bible, and of our Brother, William Branham, is Jesus Christ. No man ever preached Christ more effectively than he.

How dare we then, as his followers, hold him up between the people and Christ? How he would rebuke us if he were here.

In order to become a Christian, one does not have to hear a message preacher, or even hear about the Message. All he needs is to have access to the Word of God, learn the Plan of Salvation, and yield himself to it. When any individual believes the gospel concerning his own sinfulness, and how the life, death, and resurrection of Christ has atoned for those sins, and he repents, he becomes a Christian. Do you object that he must "in this hour" come in through the prophet of Malicah 4:5, then think back, dear friend, how many of us came to Christ before we knew of a prophet or his Message? Do we seek to change the unchanging Word which says, "**But as many as received Him (Christ) to them gave He power to become the sons of God.**" (John 1:12)

From this point on, after one has believed on His name and come into the Kingdom, it is up to the individual how he climbs God's spiritual ladder. A will to serve God with his whole heart will lead him to Sanctification, and Sanctifi-

cation will make him a candidate for the Holy Ghost, and with the Holy Ghost in his soul he will be led into all truth. (John 16:13)

When people today come to Christ for salvation, as they did in the book of Acts, they will have the same experience as they did in the book of Acts. If this be not true then Jesus is not the same as He was yesterday. Certainly there are those individuals, scattered among the various systems, who have looked to Jesus in faith and have entered the Kingdom. These precious ones are our brothers and sisters, whether or not they know of our Message.

Their entanglement with their system may not be worse, in the eyes of the Lord, than our entanglement with ours. To fail to recognize such persons as children of God, and do all to fellowship and share our revelations is to openly declare our denomination. Also, it is declaring that those in our own groups, who do not agree with our camp, may be turned away.

Such a stand destroys the New Testament concept of Christianity, and makes a mockery of divine mercy and grace. It tends to reduce salvation to a thing of our own works and makes us to

sit with the Pharisees of old. They claimed to know Moses while rejecting the principles God gave him. Do we also claim to know a prophet, while we reject principles God gave him? It's Christ first, then His prophets.

These things do not mean that we are to forsake our doctrinal absolutes; neither relax in our holy lifestyle and ways of worship. It does mean that we must tear down our walls of separation and welcome all people into our churches, the religious ones as well as those with no religion, and not only so, but we must go forth out of our churches to seek the lost.

We much preach Christ first and foremost, then let our Christ pick His own Bride from among the recruits we are able to bring in. This He will most certainly do, and if some later separate themselves from us let it be through no fault of ours. We have been taught that the seed never pulls away from the shuck. When a teachable heart is found, our patient and loving acceptance of those who may still be outside of the Message, will lead them to discard error and accept the precious truths we hold so dear.

If any people on Earth

should have a heart of compassion for the lost and misguided, it should be the Bride. Do we teach that mercy is in the Bride then close our bowels of compassion and fail to shed it abroad? If it be true that mercy is only to be found in the Bride, then what hope do those people outside the circle have if we refuse to be concerned? Far be it from the True Bride to hold herself aloof and become proud through her many revelations.

Do we see ourselves as spiritual giants? A spiritual giant is one who can come down to the level of those who need help and make himself "all things to all men". Such a giant was Paul the apostle, and our Brother William Branham. I can find no attitude of self-righteousness not spiritual smugness in their teaching. Such attitudes in us are very unbecoming if, in fact, we are who we say we are.

Of all people on Earth, the Bride should be those whose concern is for one race of people, the human race, and this concern should not be a sectarian one, only getting them into our Message Churches. We must return to the number one doctrine of the Bible and the true Message, which is persuading people to accept Christ.

Our Lord will then separate them as He sees fit. Let us not be known for how many we have refused fellowship with on the grounds of their rejecting a prophet, rather let us be known for preaching Christ to a lost and dying generation.

Will we who claim the full truth be so spiritually blind as to sit in our own fragmented and war-like churches and condemn others for being sectarian, while we refuse to clean our own skirts? While the world's church systems stand in a general state of unbelief in what we preach, at least some of their distrust can be traced to our failure to show forth a Christ-like spirit, and also to our lack of uniformity in our own doctrine.

Which Message Church do you recommend, and which Message Camp are you in? Precious little Bride, let us iron out our differences by discussing them in Christian fellowship and brotherly love. If one should, for example, investigate the Assemblies of God, he could read their doctrine, written out plain and clear. The same person would be hard put to discover our doctrine, as he moved from camp to camp he could well become more and more confused. May the Lord raise us above this

strife and confusion, lest He be compelled to raise up some from the stones to carry forth His glorious Message.

We are well aware that there is a point beyond which fellowship between baptized Believers cannot continue. This is not a call to forsake any of our scriptural and moral absolutes. Without these absolutes, Christianity would cease to exist and the world would laugh us to scorn. But let us be certain it is the sin we stand against and not our Brother, the enemy we war against and not each other.

Do I hear someone say, but we are so much farther down the road than where these others stand? I pray that you are, and I pray that I am also, but do we not understand that we have been advanced so that we can reach back, and offer to others what has been so mercifully given to us? If we are found not reaching back, then I wonder if we have advanced so far as we suppose. Dear God, give us grace and mercy for others, to the same degree you have given it to us.

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