

Where I Stand !

**(A sober letter announcing why
he would be leaving the Bible Baptist denomination—J.L.)**

By Michael E. Lundy

Dear Brother Sherman,

I really do not know how to start off this letter. The typical, “How are you doing?” just does not seem to fit in at this time. The main purpose for writing to you is basically to let you know what is going on in my life. I feel that you are entitled to that after all that we have been through in the past six years. This letter may at times not seem well put together, for that I apologize in advance.

You may ask why I am writing to you and not talking to you in your office. I still love you and your wife very much, more than I could tell you. In the past, when I have talked to you in your office, I have forgotten what I wanted to say, or just decided that it could wait till a later time. Hopefully, in writing to you, I will be able to tell you things without forgetting, or getting emotional.

I do want to repeat that I love you not only as my pastor, but also as the one that I chose to be my second father while “sojourning” here in Springfield. Time and circumstances have not diminished my feelings. BELIEVE what you have just read, and this letter will not be misinterpreted.

I have been a “Baptist” all my life. When I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord, it was at the feet of my mother, a Baptist Sunday School teacher. Through her faithful and godly way of life, I came to want to serve the Lord in my life to become a pastor, and not long after that came here to B.B.C. Throughout all of my Christian life I have been taught not to fear ANY of the Powers of Darkness. I was taught that the Sword of the Word WAS the weapon that would bring down strongholds and bring into captivity godless thoughts and ways of life. When the Jehovah’s Witness came to our door, I wanted to know the answer to their questions, not close the door in their face and let them continue on their road to hell that they did not believe in. When Karen met some Mormons while working at Country Kitchen, I did not balk at the fact that they were willing to talk to me if I went into their home. I even came to you and asked for your help, which you freely gave, knowing that I would go and talk with them. You even encouraged me to do it. In order to talk with these people, I have read in books and in their literature, just what it was they believed. I have tested it to the best of my ability to find out if there was any measure of truth to what it was that they had to say before I tried to share with them. I even studied from my Bible to make sure that Jesus Christ was indeed God so that I could say that I believe it for myself after reading God’s Word. The same had to basically be done with the Mormons—for just like almost any other cult, they do not believe that Jesus is God. In all of these instances, I received nothing but encouragement in my studies. There was basically a “go gettem” attitude.

Then we began to hear from Mark about this “group” that his brother was meeting with. Almost everything that we heard from Mark, I later learned was taken out of context or had been misunderstood. Anyway, whenever Mark would talk to his brother

on the phone, I usually stood by him and tried to feed him the best answers that I could from what little knowledge I had. I kept thinking that his brother was really in the wrong. I felt that somehow, if he would only listen, the Word of God would be able to set him free from some of the mistakes that he was walking in. When the chance came for Mark to go to VA and talk with the people that Troy (his brother) was meeting with, I told him it was his obligation to go because that is what we had been praying for. He went, and then he came back—and life just has not been the same since.

I determined in my heart that I would try to either “get Mark back on the correct track,” or find out what was causing this change. You see Brother Sherman, I loved Mark like a brother.

Mark had pretty much decided that he was moving when Langford came down here the first time. All I wanted at this time in my life was for someone to prove Langford and the people that he was with that they were wrong. That is why I called you on Monday and asked if you would meet with him, you were the only one that I could think of that might be able to prove him wrong. Actually, if you had been able to prove him wrong, even if Langford had not admitted this, I would have seen it. I would have known that he was wrong and so would Mark. You never really knew Mark. If he had seen Langford proved wrong, he would never have left. The day that I knew Langford was free was a Tuesday, you told me that you had a lot going on that Tuesday and would not be able to meet with Langford. I offered Thursday as an alternative, that is when you told me, “I really do not see the point in talking to him. I am not going to change his mind, and he is not going to change mine.” It was then that I suggested to you that maybe Don could meet with him, IF THAT WAS ALRIGHT WITH YOU. You said that that was fine. If you had said that you did not want anyone meeting with him, at that time I would have said—“Alright, I will tell Mark to let Langford know that I will not talk to him and neither will Don.”

Here is something that I still do not understand. If we have the truth, why when all of this was happening was no one willing to talk to “them” about it? The “wolf” came in and was mauling one of the sheep, and was hunting down the others, but the shepherd did not come to the forefront to meet him. Instead, he sent someone else in the place that he should have taken. WHY???? In my eyes Langford was no wolf, but in other’s eyes he was; but wolves do not ask to see the shepherd—or anyone else that would be willing to talk. When others became involved, students at BBC, some of those students wanted to have professors talk with Langford (which Langford was willing to do). The only professors that I could think of refused to talk with him unless he was willing to just “sit and be taught,” or unless he was willing to ask questions but not have a chance to talk himself. If Langford had made these same stipulations, we would have wondered what he was afraid of—or he would have been called egotistical and full of pride.

The meeting that we had with Langford went fine. The reactions that I have HEARD Don had toward Langford have been COMPLETELY different from the reaction that Don himself told me. I have heard that Don said that there was a feeling of “animosity” in the air, but in all the talks that Don and I had after the meeting that was not the way that he described it to me at all. There was not a spirit of animosity in the air. This was the second time that I had met with Jack Langford and I was not wooed by his

charm, nor was I blinded by my closeness to Mark. Much of what he said interested me and made some sense. I knew that much of it I would have to study out for myself.

Since that time, you and I seem to have almost ceased to talk. I have never come to you, and you have never come to me. I am sure that we both have our reasons, our excuses, and our logics about not coming to each other; but I guess that they do not really matter any more—we were both in the wrong.

Lately though, you have been going through the book of Ephesians. When you started it, I thought that would be interesting because if through no other way, I would find out what you really thought. I guess that you will also find out just what I think. If you have been wondering “where we are,” then hopefully this letter will help you out. I would like to interject at this time that this letter is for only your eyes and no one else—not the deacons, not the trustees, not even Don.

Before I continue any further, let me state that the intent of this letter is not to teach you—nor is it to persuade you in the way that I am thinking. Do not take this letter as a personal insult to your integrity, or as a slam against you. I am simply letting you know where I stand so that you may deal accordingly. If for any reason that I have not listed, you are insulted, I apologize in advance for making you feel that way; but I do not apologize for what I believe.

THE BODY

To put it quite plainly, I believe that there is only one body of Christ, and that it is manifested on the geographically local level in many places. In the beginning, before all of the sects and divisions, there were only believers in Jesus Christ. There was no membership kept—for those that were members already had their names kept on the roll sheet in heaven, The Lamb’s Book of Life. In the Bible we read of no one moving from one spot to another and having to switch their membership because they were already members of one another. You have stated many times from the pulpit that the people in the Bible were not great theologians, and on this I agree.

The letter to the Ephesians was written “to the saints which are in Ephesus.” Paul then proceeds to tell the Ephesians that because of Christ, the Gentiles that were at one time far off have now been brought nigh the Jews; and that in fact they have been made into one through Jesus Christ. It is quite apparent here that he is talking about the Jews and the Gentiles as a race. He then states, “that He might reconcile both unto God in one body on the cross, having slain the enmity thereby...Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, BUT FELLOW-CITIZENS WITH THE SAINTS AND OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD.” Yes, Paul here is talking about the Ephesians, but he is talking ABOUT the broader topic of redemption and what that meant to the Jews and the Gentiles (as races). To say that because he is writing to the Ephesians, they would only think that meant the Jews and the Gentiles that met with them is to bend this passage to a certain way of thinking.

Certainly this is what the mystery is that is mentioned in Ephesians 3:5-7. “That the gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel” is of the same theme as the verses that are mentioned above.

The mystery that “has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets” was not that just the gentiles and the Jews in Ephesus have been made into one body; but that all Gentiles and all Jews have been brought into one body. Of course, the Ephesians have benefited from this, but Paul is talking of the races being in the same body.

How many Gods are there no matter where you are, who you meet with, or where you meet? Only one! How many Holy Spirits are there whether you live in Chicago or Australia? Only one! How many flocks does Christ say that He will have in John 10:16? Only one! How many wives should a man have? Only one! How many brides are in Revelation? Only one! So why when we come to the verse in Ephesians that says there is only one body do we suddenly try to come up with excuses to make it fit our particular denominational standing? There is only one body.

Paul also uses the analogy of Christ’s relationship to the church and a man and wife. If this is referring only to the assembly that is at Ephesus, then the only conclusion is that Christ has many wives. He would have well over 500 wives in the B.B.F.I. alone. What kind of analogy is that? It is a beautiful one if one realizes that Christ has only one church, and a man should have only one wife.

All of the letters that Paul wrote are written to the geographically limited portion of the body; hence we have the letter to Ephesus, Philippi, Rome, etc... Not one of the letters that he wrote had a name that the believers were meeting under—except that name that is above all other names; and that name was a name that was common to them all no matter where they were meeting.

In the city of Corinth it seems that the believers had started to name themselves apart according to the leaders that they chose to follow. We do not know how many homes these Christians were meeting in, but we do know how many names they were to meet under. In a letter that deals with physical adultery, incest, brother going against brother in court, and misuse of spiritual gifts, Paul chose the divisions among them as the first item to tackle. What was the question that Paul posed to the believers? “Is CHRIST divided?” Because on these divisions Paul had to state in chapter 3, “And I brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive, and even now are not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?” Paul did not like the divisions that had arisen among the believers because they were misrepresenting Christ. Later he would write, “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body being many, are one body, SO ALSO IS CHRIST.” I wonder if Paul wrote a letter to the believers in Springfield, what he would say about the divisions that exist among us?

In the letter that is written to the churches of Galatia, Paul writes, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all ONE in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). I see that this verse is dealing with salvation and the promise that was made thereof—but that salvation has made all class distinctions null and void because now they are all one in Christ. Then Paul goes on to list the works that are of the flesh, and among them are three of the items that Paul talked to the Corinthians about—“...idolatry, sorcery, hatred, CONTENTIONS, jealousies,

outbursts of wrath, SELFISH AMBITIONS, DISSENSIONS, and heresies.” Something else that I found interesting was that the word heresy is also translated as “sect” four out of the seven times that this word is used in the N.T. In fact, in one of the versions that I cross referenced this verse in (and a few commentaries that I looked at) replace this word with “party spirits,” “factions,” or “sects.”

Paul was actually telling all of the assemblies in the region of Galatia that a work of the flesh was the party spirit. That was because they were all to be local representations of what the body was as a whole. In other words, they were all one in Christ.

What it comes down to is this. When you received Christ as your Savior, you were placed into Christ. When I accepted Christ as my Savior, I was placed into Christ also. It did not matter that you were in CA and I was in MO. We were both placed into Christ at the point of salvation. That one body that hung on the cross is the one body that we were both placed into. How many bodies hung on the cross? How many Christs were you and I placed into regardless of where we were? When anyone gets saved they are placed into the same Christ that you and I were placed into at the point of salvation. The same privileges that we have in heaven are theirs. That same body that you and I were placed into, they also were placed into. Now I ask you, is Christ divided?

Are all these differing sects, divisions, and denominations what Christ had in mind for His called out people. One of the greatest condemnations that the world brings against us as believers in Christ is that we cannot even get along with our own kind! Christ prayed in the garden, “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me... I in them, and You in Me; that they may be perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me” (John 17:20-23). I have heard many an explanation of this verse from different books and from different people. Most of them just did not seem to fit into the context of this verse. After all, what is to be the example of this “oneness” that we are to have? The relationship of the Father and the Son is the example! Just as the Father and the Son are united and are one—Christ wants us to be one. This does not mean that “we just need to be one in our hearts, regardless of the way that we may act on the outside.” What a farce that would be if that were the way the Father and the Son were one. This “oneness” had to be an outward working—not just spiritual. How else were the spiritually blind eyes of the world to see this oneness. Yet this oneness was to have an effect on the world. One was that they were to believe that the Father had sent the Son, and the other was that they may KNOW that the Father had sent the Son. Now that is a “mission program” if there ever was one. I know that much good has come from many things that people have done within denominations, but that is no justification if these denominations are sin. God’s plan will always be the best, and if this is one of God’s ways of giving His testimony to the world in darkness—then there is no telling the damage that “sectarianism” has done.

I also realize that leaving the Baptist would not stop denominationalism, nor would many people even notice. You once spoke on prejudice, and in that sermon you answered this question for me. You told us that if we were not prejudiced, that would not stop the rest of the world—but we could start with us. If denominationalism is wrong

then it does not matter the good that is in it, or the fact that everybody does it, or that it is an accepted fact, or even that I may benefit from it—if it is sin then it is sin and should be avoided.

I still do not know what the name Baptist does for me that the name of Christ does not do (and much more). It gives me no worthy name. The name of Christ is the name that I now bear, and it is above every name; so no worthy name would be lost. It does not keep me in correct doctrine for only the Scripture does that. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God, (not Baptist) may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” The Holy Spirit came to live in me at salvation and He is fully capable to keep me in correct doctrine, if I am but willing to hear His voice. No true fellowship SHOULD be lost if I did not carry the name Baptist. “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” This fellowship is not a choice, nor is it something that one needs to come forward to an altar and sign a card to get in. It cannot be lost as long as one is “walking in the light as He is in the light.” Since the Bible does not tell us to carry the name Baptist—this is not a prerequisite for “walking in the light.” The name Baptist does not qualify me to serve the Lord in any way. For from the Bible I know that: 1) I am COMPLETE in Christ—Col. 2:10, 2) I can do ALL THINGS through Christ which strengtheneth me—Philip. 4:13, 3) He has already placed me within His body—I Cor. 12:18.

I am not trying to be difficult or cause “problems.” If my intent were to cause problems I could have done that long ago. I am not trying to be vengeful for anything in the past. I am writing this letter to you because things as they are, are becoming more difficult to reconcile with the things that should be. I have already been told not to worry about this and just drop it—to concentrate on the things that are more “important.” Christ wrote about Christians being one and so did Paul. Peter makes definite allusions to it, while John talks about grounds of fellowship that Christians should have because they are in Christ. If the Holy Spirit thought that it was important enough to write about in the Word of God, then surely we ought to think that it is important enough to live out. Soon after Mark left you quoted a man by the name of George Whitfield, a Methodist preacher: “Father Abraham! Whom have you in heaven? Any Episcopalians? ‘No!’ Any Presbyterians? ‘No!’ Have you any Independents or Secessionists? ‘No!’ Have you any Methodists? ‘No!’ ‘No!’ ‘No!’ Whom have you up there? ‘We don’t know know those names here,’ was the reply. ‘All who are here are Christians, believers in Christ, men who have overcome by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.’” This is where you stopped the quote and then finished by saying that was true, but here on earth that is just not the way it is. I like the way that Whitfield finished it though when he said—“Oh! If that be true,” cried Whitfield, “then God help us all to forget party names and become Christians in dead and in truth!”

I do love you Brother Sherman, and I love all those that are at Bellview. If I did not—I would have left long ago. If we do leave it is not to join some other group, nor is it because we have found someone better than you all. It would be due to a conviction that living and working under a sectarian name does not represent the name of Christ as He wanted it presented to a lost world. It would be because the name Baptist DOES help

to keep the sectarian walls going. It would be because to “do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” is something that cannot be shared with any other name.

What will we do? I do not know right at this moment, I will live each day one step at a time. Whatever I do I know that it should not be considered as “rash.” After all, it has almost been two years since all of this started. May God richly bless the lives of all who hear His Holy Name.

I love you in Christ,

Michael E. Lundy