

DIVISION IN THE INDIVISIBLE

The Ultimate Scandal Among God's people

Unity

A highly important aspect of the character and nature of God is the unity of His person. When Jesus Christ was once asked which was the greatest commandment in the Law He responded by quoting Deut. 6:4,5—"Hear, O Israel; Jehovah our God is One Jehovah; And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might," (Mark 12:29). This is still No. 1 of "The 13 Principles of the Jewish Faith." Likewise the greatest mission the Jewish people had in regards to the Gentile world was to reflect the truth of the ONE God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, in contrast to the multiplicity of all the grotesque deities of the heathen world. As is well known, the voices of the prophets became an indictment against Israel's miserable compromise in its mission.

Actually, the unity of the Godhead as reflected in the Lord Jesus Christ is still the most important ministry that the church has on earth today. Jesus Christ is God incarnate. He is one with the Father and His people form "one body" (I Cor. 10:17; 12:12,13; 12:20; Rom. 12:4,5; Eph. 2:16; Col. 3:15). They are His representatives to the heathen world. Thus, the theme of unity is the foremost subject in the prayer of Christ before His death (John 17:15-26).

Christ's Prayer

To expound on this prayer almost seems futile to my mind. How can anyone enlarge and attempt to explain such clarity of thought? The mere reading of these words, especially in the midst of trouble and disunity, brings cold chills to my being. Can ever a Christian, who trifles in his walk and conduct and selfishly and divisively ignores the deep burden of Christ's heart, expect to escape the searching eye of the one who uttered this prayer? Like when Jesus Christ looked from the High Priest's palace, as He was being mocked, upon Peter standing in the courtyard by the warm fire, and caught his eye (Lk. 22:61), so Christ looks upon carnal selfish Christians who have denied Him by their divisiveness and carnality. Like Peter, many can turn now and repent their cowardly conduct as they allow the piercing truths of this prayer to look upon their own hearts:

"As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word, that they all may be One; as Thou Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be One in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory that thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be One, even as We are One: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in One; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me..."

How sickening it is, that in these terminal days for "Christendom" many sectarian leaders will quote portions of Christ's prayer in John 17 as a basis for their "Ecumenical" (World Wide) unity movement. This is a man-made, Satan inspired, unity. Christ's prayer was most certainly not made on behalf of the ungodly counterfeit church called in the Bible "Mystery Babylon." And yet, how sad it is that true Christians are not awakened to a consciousness of the importance of Christ's prayer for them—especially in these days of apostasy.

The setting for this prayer was Christ's realization of His soon rejection by the world and His own racial brethren. He would become a sacrifice for the sins of the world in the midst of the world's hatred and bitterness against Him. Yet in the midst of all that how hard it must have been, and how deeply He must have been hurt, when His real brethren—those who truly believed in Him—would either go back from following Him, or no longer walk openly with Him, or temporarily depart from Him. No doubt true Christians add to His disappointment even now as they walk in callous disunity. How is it that we too can add to the burden of His suffering? The apostle answers, "Are ye not carnal and walk as men?"—whereas there is "division among you" (I Cor. 3:2,3)." This, of course is the answer—the fleshly walk of Blood-bought believers, instead of "walking in the Spirit" and "keeping the unity of the Spirit."

The Body of Christ

The church of Jesus Christ is most often described in the Bible as "the body of Christ," (See Rom. 12:4,5; I Cor. 10:16,17; 12:12-27; Eph.1:23; 2:16; 3:6; 4:4,12,16; 5:23,30; Col. 1:18; 2:17,19 & 3:15). This identification is not without supreme significance. When Jesus Christ was born of a virgin and became a man we speak of "the incarnation of Christ." God the Son was walking in human flesh on earth. This is also called one of the great "mysteries" of our faith. Another great "mystery" is the re-embodiment of Christ in His people on earth today. Every penitent believer has been regenerated and supernaturally "baptized into one body," also called "the church which is His body." By virtue of this work the church became the re-incarnation of Jesus Christ on earth today in this dispensation of time. Thus, the church of Jesus Christ is designed by God to be the present manifestation of His Son to the world through the Holy Spirit in their lives. We, as redeemed sinners, by His matchless grace, have the privilege of actually becoming the very animation of His person, as a testimony, to a Christ rejecting world. As Christ walked on earth so the church should be in its walk and conduct.

He was "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners" (Heb. 7:26). The church, likewise, is designed and equipped to be a reflection of His holiness, love, grace and separation. The only possible way Christians can fulfill their duty on earth today is to be in total submission to the will and headship of Jesus Christ. And they can do this through their submission to the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

The life and fellowship of Christ's body is the fellowship of Christ in purity and love. If there is no purity then there can be no true love. If there is no true love there can be no purity. The purity and love is, of course, that which is so defined in the Word of God. With purity and love in proper order comes unity. Above all else the church is a reflection of the unity of the person and purpose of Christ. This trilogy of purity, love and unity is a perfect reflection of Christ's image to this dark and dying world. The church's commission is to "walk" in this "unity" (Eph. 4:1-6).

The Unholy Unity

There is an unholy unity to be sure. Divided, man-made "churchanity" in fraternalism together produces an anti-christ image to the world, wherein purity becomes iniquity, love becomes hypocrisy, and unity is of the unholy spirit. Man-made churchanity is a horrible counterfeit of the Devil. It has properly been said, "Denominationalism unites what God wants divided, namely the saved and the unsaved, and divides what God wants united, namely His blood-bought children."

In the light of Christ's prayer we can see that a compromising, carnal, disunited church is a living denial and betrayal of the singular character of Christ. What is worse still, is the fact that a diluted, defiled church helps represent to the world "another christ." There is absolutely no way possible that Christians can fulfill God's purpose for them on earth other than by a total submission to the will and dictates of the Head of the church—and these are clearly given in the body of revelation for that church. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God," and "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 10:17 & 14:23). What Christianity needs today more than ever are shepherds that are dedicated to this principle.

Discipline

For Christ to be incarnate in our miserable bodies of clay, with our Adamic appetites toward sin, can only be accomplished by our disciplined submission to His Holy Spirit working in us and by submission to God's disciplinary judgements against our carnal natures. Proper discipline first of all is the self crucifixion of our sin nature. Then it is the corporate judgement of sin against the carnal manifestations in the body of Christ. And this discipline must be without partiality.

The church of Jesus Christ is not a natural family hierarchy. The church is the family of God which is made up of a new species on earth—"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (II Cor. 5:17). It is formed by the blood ties of Calvary, where Christ shed His precious blood on our behalf. Human blood ties are not worthy to be compared with the Divine blood ties. Consequently, to have solidarity in the family of God and coordination in the body of Christ there must be discipline—a discipline that is not partial to earthly family ties. If there is no discipline, then Christianity is a good theory, but not a fact of life. The sectarian disarray of modern Christendom is a direct result of an unholy philosophy of toleration and compromise. (This polluted philosophy, of course, tolerates no insubordination to its ungodly goals). Modern Christendom that tolerates all kinds of treason against God's Word is the absolute antithesis of biblical Christianity. Herein we have the contrast between "the church which is Christ's body" versus "the Babylon of Christendom."

The Solution

The solution to the problem is not to try and build churches that are closer to the true one, nor to change some of the more offensive errors of the large denominations, nor to have some looser organization which allows more fraternity among all believers. These "solutions" are simply "differences in degree—not in kind." The only solution is to wholeheartedly walk in all the counsel of God's holy Word, and be totally submissive to the Head of the church. It would, furthermore, be an open denial of God's wisdom and provision to say "This cannot be done!"

None of us are ignorant of the fact that many have seen these precious truths down through the ages, and walked in them through many severe persecutions by the counterfeit "Christendom." In more recent times it has been our privilege to reprint and pass out the different tracts written by Lyman H. Johnson, and later by his son, Burnell D. Johnson. Those men saw these truths back in the 1860s & 70s, and with some deep appreciation were willing to suffer many false accusations for Christ's sake in their walk outside denominational sectarianism. Their tracts like, "Abominable Idolatries," and "Christ's Church verses The Churches of Antichrist," and "The Fortress of Faith and the Refuge of Lies," and "Knockers," and "The Organized Church," are beautiful examples of individuals who were willing to walk in the light, in the midst of heart sickening apostasy. These men were willing to be unpopular. They did not fraternize with the sects and denominations. They believed there was only one body and were endeavoring to walk that way. The reproach they suffered was for Christ's sake.

Discovering Again The Body of Christ

Whenever and wherever a group of Christians begins to discover the beauty and holiness of meeting together outside of man-made religious traditionalism and under the sacred banner of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ alone, they will have a sparkling revival in their souls and an enthusiasm that cannot be abated. They will discover anew the realism and vitality of God's holy Word and turn from the pollution of modern religious idolatry. Like the kings of Judah of old—Asa, Jehosaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah—they will not only clean out and destroy the paganism of the modern "high places," but they will also reactivate for themselves the only efficient system of worship that Almighty God has designed. This will include proper disciplinary judgment such as that illustrated in II Chron. 15:12,13 and 19:5-7. When this enthusiasm is truly heaven inspired, unselfish and unprideful, there will be once again granted to that generation of believers the privilege of functioning in a local church life as God designed it and Christ, Himself, will be the vital member of it. Make no mistake about it, Biblical Christianity is practical and real anywhere and anytime. All that one needs is confidence in God's Word and the love of God in his heart.

Such was the little group of Christians under the spiritual leadership of Maurice M. Johnson which began in the late 1920s and 30s. Though pitifully small and lacking in all the dignity of sophisticated "churchanity," nevertheless it was thrilled at the possibility of really walking in God's Word without compromise. It was that very difference that caught the deep respect and admiration of others who realized that "that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Lk. 16:15).

Many others came to appreciate this dedicated association and firmly cast their lots with them in love, to face the rest of their lives, and the rest of their life's battles, within that company of believers. Spiritual Christians could easily recognize that the love that bound them together was not that clanishness of a cult, but rather "The love of God shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 5:5). To live lives separated from the world, the flesh and the devil was not a legalistic demand, but rather an eager privilege for their gracious Saviour. This feisty little group of "troublemakers," as they were viewed by the rest of "respectable Christendom," was actually caught up in the Biblical romance of walking with Christ Jesus the Lord, bearing some of His reproaches.

The Design of Discipline

Not only was this company of Christians thrilled at the reality and vitality of the Word of God, but they also soon discovered the real need of Biblical discipline that accompanies such a profession of godliness. This should not be a surprise to anyone who reads the New Testament with soberness. In the book of Acts, shortly after the church of Jesus Christ sprang to life, we see the cold and lifeless bodies of Ananias and Sapphira being carried away to be buried in the grave, like lovely liars and dignified "church goers" who hold in contempt the holiness of Christ's Divine institution and the sacredness of the hour. They "played church" on "holy ground" and were stricken dead as a result. Such discipline was not meant to display the sweetness and compassion of God. It was designed to strike fear into the hearts of all those who professed to take those sacred truths to their bosoms and allow their lives to be representative to the world of the LIVING Lord Jesus Christ on earth in His new body—"the church which is His body." Nor was this discipline hidden from outsiders (Acts 5:11). In fact, it caused most people to back off and appreciate that this fellowship of enthusiastic and devoted people was not just another religious club they could join (Acts 5:13).

The Real Family Ties

Such discipline does show, however, a love that is higher, broader and more sacred than any fleshly earthly family tie could ever be. This is the discipline that Divine love demands, and only springs from the proper fear and respect for God's holiness and order. This is the species of love that would have the Levites take the swords against their very own family members who had broken God's law. If you have never done it before, please read Exodus 32:25-29 and Deut. 33:8-11. The Levites became the holders of the highest office in Israel, and the most respected tribe in the sight of God, and the privileged ministers of the Word. And why was such favor bestowed upon them? Simply because they placed loyalty to God and His Word above all earthly fleshly ties—

"Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed Thy Word, and kept Thy covenant" (Deut. 33:9).

Were you to think that the Levites, who took the sword against their own family members who were guilty of idolatry, are a relic of the past and could never serve as an example for Christians in this Age of Grace, then let me quote from the lips of the most gracious man who ever walked the face of the earth—

"Who is My mother? and who are My brethren?" And He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples and said, 'Behold, My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother'" (Matt. 12:46-50).

No one can deny that the context of Christ uttering these words was while His own flesh and blood mother and brothers stood outside this congregation of people patiently desiring to speak with Him. Such an expression under these circumstances could easily be interpreted as an act of heartless contempt. Instead, these words are the institution of a new family with such love as is not to be

compared or even equated to the physical Adamic ties. Biblical Christianity, at the outset, must be a decision between the human earthly ties and the spiritual heavenly ties—

"If any man come to Me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (Lk. 14:26).

"He that loveth father and mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10:37).

Those who heard Christ speak these words could easily charge Him with splitting families and dividing parents from their children, and children from their parents. And we might answer that from one perspective, that is precisely what He came to do!—

"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household" (Matt. 10:34-36).

There are not many who are willing to make this sacrifice for Jesus Christ. And those who hurl derisions at all those who do are simply commending them in the sight of God, though they don't intend to do it. Those who choose the earthly family ties over the spiritual family ties are blind. They forget that the earthly is but temporal dust, whereas the spiritual is eternal and paradisiacal. They forget that the human fathers are to be a reflection of the Heavenly Father, and the human mothers and brothers and sister are but a reflection of the spiritual new creation. No man can be complete and truly happy until he has come to that condition of realization.

Division

What Lucifer could not do to destroy the church by outward persecution, he could do by the inward division of its members. Christians, who though truly born again with new natures yet choose to walk in the flesh as mere men, become his chief instruments to wreck havoc in the body of Christ. The church of Jesus Christ is one body and yet believers can be divided in their walk and conduct. Division in the body of Christ becomes a cruel cancer. That, unless it be immediately cut out and destroyed, will slowly steal away the life and vitality of the church's testimony to the world.

Only by the process of "purging out...the old leaven...of malice and wickedness" could the Corinthian assembly be a "new lump...of unleavened bread in sincerity and truth" (I Cor. 5:6-8). Such disciplinary action as the inspired apostle instructed for the church brought in response all kinds of harsh and unfair accusations against him by unmoved members of that congregation. They already carnally judged him (See I Cor. 4:3) and indicated they could get along well without him (4:8). He lost his commendation in their eyes (II Cor. 3:1) and they were not to be restricted by him (6:12). He was looked upon as being base, cruel and hard (10:1) and some thought his letters were a powerful front to hide a puny appearance (10:10,11). Others thought he was a fool in light of their wisdom (11:16,17) and many of them would not commend him to anyone (12:11), etc. Of course, all these accusations did not deter Paul from his goal of standing true to the One who called him, nor did such complaints cause him to wilt and make accommodations for others' carnality. Instead, Paul

kept his eyes fixed upon the Head of the church, and followed His instructions. The "rod" that Paul used, being cut and prepared by Jesus Christ, is still the most effective deterrent to such carnality that any of us know about (read I Cor. 4:21 and II Cor. 13:2,3). In reality, that splendid apostle was the most loving man on the face of the earth, and the blind, carnal Corinthians didn't even know it. Oh, that leaders in the church today might be more like him. I hope that is your judgment as well.

One of the clearest and strongest accommodations I ever heard given to Maurice Johnson was by one of his most bitter enemies. After delivering a long and extremely bitter tirade against Maurice, this man paused, seemed to reflect and take a deep breath, then added: "Of course, if I ever had a serious problem, he would be the first man I'd ever go to for help."

A Little History

In 1948 Homer Rule was ministering in the Fort Worth, Texas area and needed to be dealt with by Maurice Johnson. Homer was clearly preaching false doctrine and several families stood with him. They all left to establish a separate "fellowship." It was a sad break at the time and was strongly felt because the Fort Worth assembly was small. One brother, who was there and was relatively new at the time, said it felt like the assembly was split in half. This was confirmed by another who was also there at the time.

In 1958 and '59 Richard Bailey inspired division in the assembly of believers in the Tulsa, Oklahoma area. Richard was cruelly assisted in his schismatic efforts by many other proud individuals. All the pleas from brethren in Texas, California and Virginia went unheeded. The leaders that Richard previously respected were now looked upon as mere mechanical puppets whose jaws moved but no words ever reached his ears. Richard and the many who stood with him could not be retrieved from their proudful position. The Tulsa assembly, which was much larger than the Fort Worth assembly in 1949, was virtually split in half. After many hours were spent on their behalf, and many tears were shed, and many hearts torn, the carnal ones simply and coldly left. Actually, Richard had planned in advance as to what they would do, and so the dye was cast even before the efforts were made to prevent the division. The body of Christ, as represented in that Tulsa assembly, was torn and rent beyond repair. By the encouragement of Maurice and other leaders, the rest of the assembly that remained and those assemblies from across the country were instructed to apply the principles of Titus 3:10; Rom. 16:17,18; I Cor. 11:17-19, etc. to all those who departed with Richard, because that was God's order. Richard, of course, charged all "the other side" with causing the division, yet he never applied the discipline of "avoidance" as instructed by the Head of the church to those "others." His inconsistency condemns him.

Like king David, some individuals possess soulish sympathy for their own flesh and blood relatives, which keeps them from properly implementing the discipline that God has ordered to be applied toward those unruly members. King David, you may remember, mourned soulishly for his son Absalom, who was a proud, egotistical and murderously covetous young man. Finally, Joab, David's captain, rebuked David saying, "You love your enemies, and hate your friends...If Absalom had lived and all we had died today, then it would please you well" (II Sam. 19:1-8). Only then did David awaken from his carnal stupor and acknowledge God's holy order, and restore himself to his brethren who fought for the truth. Many Christians today are not any different from King David in

their soulish weaknesses toward their own flesh and blood family members. Neither should they be exempt from the type of rebuke that was given to David. The schism in Tulsa was not the first division among these Christians under Maurice Johnson's leadership, nor would it be the last. However, in this case a whole assembly eventually disintegrated in time.

In 1968 Bob Thompson and those standing with him were dealt with. This was initially done directly under Maurice Johnson's leadership. Under joint counsel with Maurice, the same Scriptures were applied to all those families and individuals who stood with Bob Thompson in his defection. Thankfully, there were not that many who left.

In the late fall of 1973 brother Wilbur Johnson made a special trip to Phoenix, Arizona and literally spoke his heart out in an effort to prevent division there. A few weeks later he died. His message is preserved in the 1974 Family Letters. Sad to say, the deep seated bitterness which saturated many in that assembly were beyond the point of remedy. In time the assembly has literally vanished. Brother Wilbur Johnson was a very loving shepherd, and would do anything in his power to prevent a marking, but when it had to be applied through the years, especially as in the Tulsa assembly and in Fort Worth, he stood solidly behind it, recognizing God's order in the discipline.

California is no different

In the California area, after Brother Maurice Johnson's illness and retirement, there had been a gradual build-up of opposition to what was ministered on the subjects of sectarianism, worldliness and modesty. The heritage that had been left us by Maurice Johnson, Ed Stevens, Wilbur Johnson and others was now under subtle and serious attack. Their strong leadership in the past had firmly dealt with assaults in these areas, but now they were gone, and the younger ministers and leaders in the various assemblies were all too hesitant to step in and deal with the issues.

However, this opposition finally came to a head with a focus on Ron and Bill Blain of Tulare, California. In the early sixties they heard some truth and came out of the Baptist denomination to walk in the truth with us of the "one body." The course of action that they now followed was witnessed by many, and is not really contested by them.

Five or six families, under Ron's general leadership, stopped coming to the regularly announced meetings and started to conduct separate meetings on their own. They laid many and bitter complaints against the other saints and against what was ministered as the reasons for their separate meetings. This action, by itself, spelled open division, the party spirit, or heresy. Even the carnal Corinthians didn't go so far as to have separate meetings in their factions. However, this was the extent of Ron's carnal leadership. Brethren in leadership from other assemblies in California and across the country initiated several attempts to stop the obvious division. In fact, they were willing to submit themselves to some of the most caustic accusations and charges that I have heard in a long time. Yet these leaders made themselves available for private meetings and public meetings. Yet, when the time came for rebuttals to the accusations by those in leadership, the accusers would not even show up. What contempt they manifested. John Morey presented many Scriptures, by letter and in person, to encourage them to obey God's Word in "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit." This they flatly rejected.

Robert Grove and Jack Langford took the initiative and went to the various ones in the division in Tulare, even to the homes and offices of these accusers, including that of Ron and Bill Blain, to attempt to resolve differences and not to cut off fellowship. Instead, Ron and Bill slandered the effort by accusing us of being "more sectarian than the Baptists and/or other groups." Since they had already left us with contempt, and rejected all our efforts, we had no choice but to initiate the assembly marking of their ungodly conduct.

Ron Blain and most all those other families who followed him graduated from their own private meetings to begin attending services at many local denominations and "interdenominational" groups. They had fraternity with everything from the "Bible Churches" to the Pentecostal churches, and from the Baptist and Brethren churches to the "Calvary Chapel" churches. To put it bluntly, they religiously fornicated with more spiritual whores in a year's time than most sectarians do in a life time. Of course, they justified this by saying that now they can love all God's people, and that they could broaden their perspective of the whole church as they could never do among us. Like those intoxicated on wine and love, they babbled about how wonderful they now felt. Likewise, they staggered back into the observance of the Popish, Pagan holidays, like Christmas and Easter—only they could do it more intelligently under the tender wisdom of one, Rick Gillam, who professed to have a very unique calling.

Bill Blain thought nothing of describing his feelings about his associations with us this way, "I felt just like being out in the middle of the Mojave Desert, with a hundred pound pack on my back, and I was dying of thirst. I would stumble and fall down, try to stand up again, only to be kicked down again." To use a little sarcasm I might respond, "Poor Bill! Apparently he didn't realize that in a wilderness journey he could have taken shelter under the cloud, and that he could have put on indestructible sandals, and gotten water out of the Rock, and eaten manna from heaven; because if he had, he wouldn't have minded the trip at all. He could have laid down the burden of his own making at the feet of a forgiving Savior any time." However, what the Blains did do was to lead many others out of the "desert" with them, back to the "garlics, leaks and onions of Egypt." (It does sound like an old story, does it not?)

Drawing A Line

When Moses came down from the mountain and saw the idolatry of the people of Israel, he, in essence, drew a line and said, "who is on the Lord's side, let him step over here" (Exo. 32:26). No one should have any trouble drawing a line and taking a stand against such obvious carnality as was manifested by the actions of Ron and Bill Blain and those standing with them. Ron wanted it to be known that "sectarianism was the issue," and we agreed! They were marked to be avoided on the basis of the applicable Scriptures— Titus 3:10; Rom. 16:17,18; II Thess. 3:6; I Cor. 5:11 with Gal. 5:20; I Cor. 1:10-13; 3:1-6; 11:18,19 and Philip. 3:17,18.

Like in Fort Worth in '48, and in Tulsa in '58, in Fort Worth again in '68, and in Phoenix in the later '70s, so it was in California in '86. Many others would not take a stand against those walking divisively. Loren and Jeanette Johnson would say, "Oh, we don't agree with what they are doing—but!?" Jim Langford would say, "Now, I don't agree with what they are doing, and I told them so—but!?" And Burnell and Allen would explain, "We had a very frank talk with them, and

told them we don't agree with going as far as they were going—but!?" "But," "But," "BUT, WHAT!?" To not mark their carnality as commanded in the Word of God is to have contempt for the Head of the church and the truth of "the one body," which we have been contending for for years and years and years. The sin of sectarianism, as we inherited it from the ministry of Maurice Johnson, Ed Stevens, Wilbure Johnson, and a host of others, is either true, or it is not. If it is not, then let us all go back to our denominations, and forget about the fact that there is "one body," and that we are to "walk" in that profession (Eph. 4:1&4). "Mark them which walk, as you have us for an example" (Philip. 3:17,18), Paul instructed.

Like there was in the past, so it came again. The carnal propaganda that originated in this immediate situation found sensitive ears in many others who raised their voices in fleshly family support. There was a poisonous attack on the ministry and leadership. "Legalism," "overlordship," "emphasis on the external instead of on the heart," were all cliches that began to be sounded out. Almost like a chorus of frogs around a pond on a hot summer night you could hear them. "Uniformity is not unity," "emphasis on the externals," "Diotrephes," "authoritarianism," "unconditional submission," they bellowed. Such choruses were music in their ears, to drown out any thought of a guilty conscience toward what they were really doing.

Failure on the part of Burnell and Allen and others to mark those carnal brethren, regardless of who they were, actually meant a repudiation of all that their own father stood for, and all that Ed Stevens stood for, and all that Maurice Johnson stood for. Furthermore, it actually meant that they would eventually have to re-evaluate all the markings in the past under their own fathers—and that is exactly what happened. They soon linked up again with various divisive brethren going back to divisions thirty years before. It became, as brother Maurice Johnson used to say, "The Fellowship of Sore Toes."

Let us make one final thing clear for sure: no amount of failure, mistakes, or outright sin on the part of those ministering could ever possibly justify, or give an excuse for, Christians to go back and join themselves to the popular sectarian religious corporations of "Christendom." There is absolutely no justification for that. They either never saw the truth on the subject in the first place, or else they are simply manifesting the spiritual disease of sectarianism itself—in one of its most subtle and dangerous forms. Nevertheless, at a large final meeting in Riverside, California for two days, those in leadership opened themselves up for examination, and the accusations melted like butter. Bill Langston's case was a vivid example. At the close of those meetings the remaining divisive brethren were obvious to all. Dwight Thompson stood out like a sore thumb. Burnell and Allen rested their charges and Burnell even acknowledged that he should observe the marking of Bill Langston. But even that didn't change the direction the Johnson brothers were going. The pull was too strong, and they repudiated all that was said, and went on their own sectarian way as if nothing had been settled.

But with every Honest Brother it Was Settled
—Thank God !
Oh yes, There will be a Final Hearing in Heaven
That will Settle It For The Rest.

This paper was originally written by Jack W. Langford in 1987 and was partially read in Fort Worth at a large meeting of men from across the country. It served as both a reflection on the past history of our association together and as a report on the problems that occurred in the California areas in the previous year.

Upon receiving the "Preserving Our Heritage" letter from Allen Hemenway (Jan. 29, 2005), I went to my file and found this paper that had been written some 18 years earlier. I dusted it off so as to speak, and re-typed it on my computer. I thought it may be appropriate to send to Allen Hemenway because he apparently doesn't realize that our whole attempt in dealing with the California problem was to, indeed, "**preserve our heritage.**" Hopefully, it might better inform him regarding his queer version of "history."

(Allen, just a little note to you personally; I do hope you read carefully this paper and realize the deep burden of heart we had back in 1985 & 86. It was an endeavor to preserve both our Biblical heritage and the heritage we had received from the older faithful brethren who ministered before us. Some of us in the Fort Worth area could not help but laugh when we read your rendition as to just how Bill Langston was dealt with. If you knew the facts you would, no doubt, laugh at yourself with us. But really, it is no laughing matter. These totally warped rumors you put out, as if they are facts, were sadly typical of a great majority of the "information" in your letter. It is very obvious, my dear brother, that "the leprosy plague" of divisiveness has infested your heart, because it is manifestly written throughout most of your material.)

Copies mailed to ministering brethren

Jack W. Langford,
Feb. 8, 2005

P.S. As to the material Allen Hemenway covered about the religious incorporation subject, he was absolutely accurate, and I told the ministering brethren so. In no way, shape or form would the older ministering brethren I knew in the 50s, 60s & 70s ever endorse this new sad deviation. When they said back then, "we are not building any man-made religious organizations" they did not lie about it! Their testimony in that regards is what led me out of man-made religious organizations, and I have no intentions of going back!

Jack W. Langford
April 16, 2007