

IS DIVISION AT HAND?

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The Bible condemns division among professed believers in Christ. I Corinthians 1:10 says, “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” Yet, there are those within churches of Christ who insist on becoming a modern denomination.

The circumstance of division in the brotherhood is troubling and agitating the church to its depths, not like a passing wind that swells the waves, but like an unending hurricane which day by day heaves the whole heart of the ocean. Some of the most highly respected and qualified preachers in the Lord’s church today are chronicling the “current status.” J.E. Choate, gifted writer, historian, and retired professor, has written, “At some time, known only to God, the traditional churches of Christ, and the Church of Christ denomination will be listed as two separate religious bodies in the United States Religious Census, as was the case in 1906.”¹ Again, he stressed: “However it is glossed over, the fact remains that the traditional conservative churches of Christ and the liberal progressive churches of Christ are two distinct fellowships. You would be persuaded there is little difference between the two, and that the church must learn to accept a ‘unity based upon diversity’ of denominational practices.”²

Wayne Jackson, gospel preacher, debater, writer, and as Alan Highers has observed, “One of the best minds in the brotherhood,” discussed the “current status”:

“Our current problem is this: We have men within the church (and they represent a sizable segment) who have lost all respect for New Testament authority. They have become sectarian to the very core of their souls. They desperately want to be affiliated with the denominations, but various factors prevent them from leaving the church outright and joining themselves to the sects. Some of them have already swayed the flocks with which they work—naïve souls whose superficial Bible knowledge has made them vulnerable to the charms of slick-talking technicians who masquerade as gospel preachers.

“Some of these feel they are ‘reformers.’ They fantasize that they have been specially called of God to bring ‘the Church of Christ denomination’ out of its suffocating sectarianism into the conglomerate of modern ‘Christendom.’ They actually envision their names inscribed in the books that will chronicle the epochal deeds of ecclesiastical history.”³

William Woodson, who has more knowledge and experience as an undergraduate and graduate Bible department head than any man living, wrote a helpful book in 1994 which has served many in unraveling the complexities of the deplorable development of division in the brotherhood. He wrote, “The almost unbelievable aspect of the present controversy is the necessity to deal with the same topics which once were controverted only with denominational champions, but now they are required to be discussed with men from among our own brotherhood!”⁴ In his closing remarks in that book he said: “But, slowly it is becoming clear to our people that a determined group of brethren are set to put into place among our brotherhood their self-styled ‘God-given vision’ of changes, however lacking they are in scriptural support. More and more our people are being obliged to recognize and resist this movement for what it is: A redefining of the church, its life, and work, to a community church type, with only the flimsiest of connection with the heritage of churches of Christ. Such a church type is not the church this generation of Christians should resolve to pass to those who come after us.”⁵

We have no way of knowing when the division in churches of Christ between the traditional churches of Christ and the denominational Churches of Christ will be recognized, but, as has been observed, it may well be that when it does all the unhappy, disgruntled members will affiliate with the denominational church that is arranged to appeal to the gratification of carnal lusts and leave members of the churches of Christ alone for a while so we can evangelize and edify to a greater degree than enjoyed amid the church bashers of yesteryear.

ENDNOTES

1J. E. Choate, “Hughes Says Church Is a Denomination,” *Firm Foundation* (www.bible-infonet.org/ff/articles/agents/112_12_08.htm, p. 1).

2J.E. Choate, “The Baby Boomers and Unity in Diversity,” *Firm Foundation* (www.bible-infonet.org/ff/articles/agents/108_08_18.htm, p. 4).

3Wayne Jackson, “The Mysterious Disciple,” *Christian Courier* on the Web (www.christiancourier.com/penpoints/mysteriousDisciple.htm, p. 3).

4William Woodson, *Change Agents and Churches of Christ: A Study In Contemporary Problems With Change Agents Among*

Churches of Christ (Athens, AL: School of Bible Emphasis, 1994), p. 4.

Ibid., p. 323.