

Why Baptists Cannot Unionize With Others

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by Buell H. Kazee

In the first place, Baptists are unique, or they or nothing. That is, they are different. There is no point to their being just another denomination. If they can possibly unite with any other religious body, and still remain true to the Bible, they ought to do it. A man ought not to be a Baptist unless the Word of God impels him to be. There is no point to our being separate, calling ourselves by another name, if we are not called of God to stand as no other people do. God is not the author of this present confusion of denominations, and, if Baptists did not exist long before there were any denominations, they have no right to their claim.

To be honest, then, and consistent with our claims, we originated with John the Baptist and Jesus Christ, or we arose along with modern denominations. If the latter, then we cannot claim to be Scriptural, for the Lord had New Testament churches long before that. I do not mean that there has to be Apostolic succession. But I do insist that there must be Apostolic identity in experience, doctrine and practice. No religious group has any right to call itself a Scriptural church if it cannot identify itself with the apostles in experience, doctrine and practice. Baptists take the position that they can do this. If they can, logically, all who disagree with them are wrong.

We assume, therefore, that Baptists are right and can so identify themselves. Logically, then, all who disagreed with them in experience, fundamental doctrine and practice are wrong. (All who disagree with us ought to have this conviction about their position or give it up).

I would not say that others are not saved. There are, doubtless, in many denominations, those who are saved. But I definitely declare that all those who are saved were saved as Baptists were, and as they preach. In many cases they are saved in spite of their doctrine instead of by it. They are saved by the truth with Baptists teach.

Now, here comes a brother into my study, a pastor of another denomination who believes that we all ought to “get together.” He insists that I ought to attend his revival meeting and help them; that he would be glad to attend ours and help us.

Why couldn't we all get together? I said, “Do you mean that?” “Yes,” he replied, “I certainly do.”

I said, "Would you accept me as a member of your church?" To which he replied, "Certainly." "Just as I am?" I insisted. "Exactly!" he said. "Would you accept all the people in our church who are like me just as they are?" I continued. "Yes siree!" he answered. He was enthusiastic. Then I said, "Well, what is wrong with us?" "Why, nothing," he replied, "except that you hold yourselves aloof and won't join in with the rest of us."

Then I hit him the body blow. I said, "if there is nothing wrong with us as we are, and you would accept us as we are, why don't you just bring your folks down and join us?"

"Yes, but," he replied, "you would insist on our being baptized again." "But you say you would accept us even though we hold to that belief," I said. He was embarrassed. I continued, "We were here long before you were. You cannot date back more than a hundred years or so. We've established positive proof of apostolic antiquity. Why don't you join us, if there is nothing wrong with us other than that we do not join you?"

He became a bit heated. "Yes, but you are unfair; you are trying to shut us out," he said. "Not on your life," I answered. "The door of our church is open to all who come professing faith in Jesus as Saviour and who will submit to baptism as a confession of that faith."

That closed the door. Then he said, "But why can't we come and take the Lord's Supper with you?" I replied with the question: "Do you believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are church ordinances?" "Yes," was the reply. Then said I, "Why do you want one of our ordinances while you refuse the other?" This brought an end to the discussion.

I have recorded this conversation to show my reader where such logic leads to. The utter silliness of a man clinging to another denomination, contending that they are right and we are wrong, but at the same time wanted to have church fellowship with us! Why doesn't he give up the idea that he is right if he thinks we are all right? And if he doesn't think we are right, why does he want to join us or have us join him?

Right here is all the reason Baptists need to keep them from unionizing with other denominations. The silly idea of telling somebody he is wrong but that just the same you will endorse him and fellowship him! Nobody has a right to claim allegiance to a denomination or church, then at the same time prostitute that allegiance by fellowshiping others. He ought to get in or get out.

The argument comes: “But we do not mean to have you Baptists join us. We just want you to come over and attend our services occasionally and join us in revival efforts.” To which I answer in the words of a good brother and friend of mine, “if I could fellowship another denomination or ‘church’ for one hour, I could, and ought to, for life. If I can justify a heresy for an hour, I ought to be willing to stick to it longer.”

Well, so much for the logic of the matter. It just will not stand.

But there is something more. Christians are made by experience. Churches are composed of Christians associated in experience; yes, but more, in expression. A church is not only to be something, it must also preach something.

Our common experience is our salvation,; the fact is in our souls. But in a church there must be common expression in doctrine and teaching about that salvation. We may have received a common experience from the Lord, but our

interpretation of that experience may differ. At least it seems so. I say I was saved through faith in Christ. The Campbellite

says he was saved by faith and baptism. Fact is, if he is saved at all, he was saved exactly as I was. But he differs with me on the interpretation of how he was saved. Granted that we have had a common experience, he or I one has erred in

the directions we give to others of how to be saved. Whichever of us is wrong will doubtless lead many others astray and deceive them. It matters what a church preaches just as much as what the church is.

Now, if I am preaching that I was saved without baptism and he says he was saved by it, and each of us contends that his preachment is Scriptural, can I endorse his preaching and be faithful to what I believe the Bible teaches? Certainly not! I can no more endorse an heretical doctrine than I can an hereticalexperience. Baptist will disdain the heretical experience of the Pentecostals who claim to speak in tongues. They have no more right to endorse a heresy in doctrine than they do a heresy in experience. But you say, “You don’t have to endorse what they preach in other denominations, they just want you to have Christian fellowship with them.” I reply that Christian fellowship is one thing, church fellowship is another. I can have Christian fellowship with anyone who has been born again and who is earnestly seeking the truth, but this fellowship is wholly on the ground of experience, not of interpretation and expression.

A church is more than fellowship in experience, it is a fellowship in doctrine and practice. It may be that we may find Christian fellowship on the basis of experience, but when we enter the realm

of the church, we must require fellowship in doctrine and practice. Christians cannot differ on experience, but they may differ on the interpretation of that experience.

I cannot sit with another brother in the realm of church relationships without endorsing what he is preaching unless I am there to oppose it. So I said to the brother referred to above: “Here in my study, you can say you have been born again. If so, I can talk with you in the spirit of a Christian and feel that attitude in you. This is Christian fellowship. But when I go over to your church and, by my presence and support of your meeting, acquiesce in what you are doing, I undeniably tell the public that I am supporting your views and recognizing your work to be according to the Word of God, This I cannot do. I must meet you, if at all, on the common ground of experience alone, not on the ground of church expression.”

SUMMARY

No man has any business joining any church unless he believes it to be identified with the churches found in the New Testament. If he has done this, there is no honest ground anywhere in the world where he can give approval of any kind to any other and be logical.

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