

Denominations

Written by K B Napier
Friday, 17 July 2009 12:43

What are denominations? One dictionary defines it as a 'class of people' or as a 'religious sect'. The latter description is about the best, for every denomination is sectarian. That is, it attempts to set itself apart from other groups of Christians (who are in different denominations), by declaring a particular set of beliefs. It does this because it thinks its beliefs are better than the beliefs of all other denominations.

No doubt members and leaders of denominations will say this is not the case; in no way are they saying their own denomination is superior. This causes a question to be asked: if it is not superior, then why belong to it? Another question arises: if a denomination is not superior but is the same as any other denomination, then why have different denominations?

Members of denominations are fierce in their loyalty. (There are exceptions of course). Just try saying that some of their denominational beliefs are not valid! Does this loyalty reflect the superiority of a denomination? Superior in which way?

In practice a group of people decide that certain facets of doctrine are not being properly taught or upheld within a denomination. So, they leave the denomination they are in and start another one, in order to teach what they believe is missing. Inevitably, those in the other denomination think those who have left are majoring on their 'new' favoured teachings, but are not placing enough emphasis on certain other beliefs. This is really the basic difference between one denomination and another - the emphases placed on certain beliefs above all others.

Another form of denominationalism is that which goes beyond differences in beliefs and which ventures into matters of irrelevant practices etc. Whereas many denominations began as a way of placing emphasis on favoured Biblical teachings (or, what are perceived to be teachings needed to be a 'good Christian'), some add layer upon layer of totally irrelevant requirements which are not found in scripture. Two excellent examples of this are the institutions of Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism. (Roman Catholicism is an example of a non-Christian system, but Anglicanism is a very close second, because it is framed in similar ways).

In these two major denominations, large numbers of non-essential and non-scriptural 'rules' are insisted upon. Also, many unscriptural teachings have been introduced. In the case of Roman Catholicism, such teachings outweigh or deny scriptural ones, making it an ungodly cult outside the definition of 'Church'. All of this is a sign of faithlessness, not of faith. Layers of material not

Denominations

Written by K B Napier
Friday, 17 July 2009 12:43

found in scripture indicate man's attempt at being supreme. By calling their efforts by denominational titles and by insisting on non-scriptural rules, they set up a completely human edifice, similar to the Tower of Babel.

The New Testament knows nothing of denominations. Indeed, it inherently opposes them! Denominations, to a greater or lesser degree, intentionally or not, place Man before God, human rules and devices before Holy Law. Even the 'free' or 'independent' churches are guilty of this, for nearly all local churches segregate themselves from others for non-essential human reasons.

There is only **one** Church, and every individual Believer, past, present and future, belongs to it. At the very least, denominations are irrelevant structures built by Man; at their worst, they are power-bases founded on the shifting sands of men's sinful pride. We must bear in mind that God's word does not suffer either silly irrelevancies or crude attempts at displacing God's order of things. Simply, denominations should not exist, because they are not of the Holy Spirit.

What of the very real ignorance concerning Baptism that spawned the Baptist church (for example)? Surely our forefathers were right to bring attention to these things? Yes, they were certainly right to do so, but we must return to a very simple fact - there is **NO SUCH THING AS THE BAPTIST CHURCH!** Or the 'Anglican' church, or the 'Roman Catholic' church, or the 'Presbyterian' church etc. (The actual denominational name is irrelevant).

There is only **ONE CHURCH** and it belongs to Christ alone. It cannot and must not be split into arbitrary chunks, to suit our whims, or even our well-meaning concern. Every church must be self-governing and must have no higher human authority or consortium. And, it is the duty of every local church to teach the whole doctrine of God, not just the parts preferred. The Tower of Babel lives - but under the name of opposing denominations! The time to demolish them is **TODAY**, but who has the spiritual maturity to do the work?

Some call for us to shun denominational Christians or churches. This is neither fair nor Biblical. If those we know in denominational churches are genuine Believers and they hold to those teachings we know to be 'major' parts of doctrine (such as salvation by grace alone, etc), then we have no right whatever to shun them! They are our brethren, not heathen or cult members.

Denominations

Written by K B Napier
Friday, 17 July 2009 12:43

If we look at, say, the Baptist Union churches, we can correctly question the dues they pay to the Union itself. Why? Because part of it is paid to the World Council of Churches, which is not a Christian organisation. This does not make members of such a local church 'infidels'; it just means they are misled or misinformed. It could even be that members want their money to go to the WCC; even then, they are still our brethren - but they are in error.

Similar errors occur in other denominations, which, in themselves, do not warrant shunning or castigating. Such errors must be pointed out - but this must not be used as an excuse to act in an unloving way toward the local church or its members. If their error is more fundamental to the Christian message, then that is another matter. Where the issue is serious, there is no option but to cut-off from the denominational church until its members repent (the same applies to non-denominational churches). Denominations are not, then, required or needed by God. They are not found in scripture and serve no real purpose. So - why do we retain them? Think on it, friends.

© June 1992

---oOo---

{loadposition btm_address}