

## DIVINELY SANCTIONED DIVISION

by Tom Wacaster

I was rummaging through my files on “unity” and “division,” and came across an article that appeared in the Dallas Morning News just over three years ago. The title of the article was “Church alliance proposed.” I’ll share with you the lead in statement: “The National Council of Churches is going to try to form a new organization that would for the first time include all major branches of U.S. Christianity, its board decided today.” This new organization is supposed to “give birth to a new ecumenical future.” I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet, but I can assure you that this effort is doomed to failure. Five hundred years have proven that all such “ecumenical” efforts that have their basis in human wisdom do not produce unity. Unity can only come by compliance to the word of God. This “birth to a new ecumenical future” is based upon compromise, not humble submission to God and His will. The best that can be expected is a loose form of unity that agrees to disagree. It is just another step in an effort on the part of foolish men to erect a “tower of Babel” that will compete with God’s plan. When will men learn that there is a far cry difference between unity and union. Someone once said that you can tie two cats together by their tails and throw them over a clothesline. You may have “union,” but you will not have “unity.” Unfortunately some of our own brethren need to learn this lesson. Attempts to join hands with the denominations is futile, not to mention out of harmony with God’s word. Paul instructed us: “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them” (Eph. 5:11). Why is that admonition so hard to understand? “No fellowship” means “no fellowship.” Actually, I don’t think it is a problem with understanding Paul’s instructions. It has, rather, to do with willingness to obey that simple injunction. Fellowship with the denominations is sinful.

But let me address another grievous error that is destroying the body of Christ from within. I think you will appreciate what I have to say if I lay some background. The following incidents are representative of the wrong attitude and the right attitude in addressing this horrible injustice being perpetrated upon the bride of Christ. The first incident concerns a congregation with which I am personally acquainted that has, through the years, struggled with the liberal tendencies that all of us have faced since the early 70’s. That congregation suffered a horrible split a little over a decade ago. The “liberal element” packed their bags and went elsewhere. One would think, therefore, that their problems were behind them and the future would be bright. But due to a lack of proper leadership they began to drift down the same old path until they are once again plagued with the push for change by certain elements within the congregation. Some concerned brethren have shared with me their sorrow and dismay in what seems another inevitable drift (more like a plunge) into liberalism. When I was asked what might be done, I simply told them, “It’s time to walk away and start another congregation.” The response I received from such a suggestion? “Well, we hate the idea of splitting the Lord’s church.” The second incident has to do with a congregation just southeast of Dallas, Texas that had reached the state of complete rebellion against God and His pattern for worship. The story is shocking, but not surprising. Elders upheld error, calling good evil, and evil good. Here was a congregation well known for its zeal, dedication, and evangelistic spirit, that had in the space of five or six years moved so far away from the truth that one wonders why they simply did not pull the sign off the building and replace

it with some denominational title to their liking. But once again, there were members who had built that congregation; members who had sacrificed their time and finances to build a shining light in this little central Texas city. Here were men and women who hated sin and hated what it had done to the body of Christ. When things had become so intolerable they decided that it was time to “come out from among them, and be ye separate” (2 Cor. 6:17). They recognized the undeniable truth that faithfulness to the Lord is not faithfulness to some physical plant, but to the word that our Lord gave to us. Consequently those faithful brethren who loved the truth decided it was time to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph. 5:11), and established a new congregation dedicated to doing all things according to the pattern revealed in God’s word.

There is a false notion that division, any division, is wrong. Some have the mistaken idea that brethren simply must tolerate error and put up with the false teachers, unqualified elders, and blasphemous and vain worship that is occurring and simply “love” one another regardless of how far they might move away from the truth of God’s word. We must not forget that Jesus warned His disciples, “Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword” (Matt. 10:34). Consequently, they, like those in the first incident to which I refer, complain and moan about what is happening in the Lord’s church (as they should do). But that is about as far as it goes. They continue to tolerate the error, contribute to the work of that congregation, and wring their hands in utter despair at what is happening. On the other hand there are those who, thankfully, are willing to walk away from error. They are not committed to property, parent, or patrons, but to the Savior Who shed His precious blood to build His church.

I once preached for the church that now tolerates error. In fact I worked with them in one capacity or another for more than half a decade. This past weekend I had the opportunity to preach for that new church that walked away from error and, against the “advice” of their friends and family, started a faithful congregation of God’s people. My heart ached as I listened to the sad plight of that once faithful congregation, but I rejoiced in knowing that there are still “7,000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” Now meeting in the local high school, with determination and zeal, they are prepared to march forward for the cause of Christ. May their number increase. Yes, beloved, there IS such a thing as Divinely sanctioned division.