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There Is One Body

By Harold Turner

In Ephesians 4:3-6 Paul admonished these Christians that they endeavour to keep the "Unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." He then added, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

In the past few years we have seen many efforts launched toward an effort to unite our religious world. Most, if not all of these efforts, have failed. Leaders of various churches have spent hours, days, and even months trying to revise their church creeds and doctrines to the point where a compromising agreement can be reached. But this is the very source of the problem of religious divisions in the first place - trying to design a creed to fit the various beliefs of our time. When men try to do what they have no faith in God's wisdom to do, failure can be the only possible result. Men have never been satisfied with God's plan, neither have they ever wanted to do things as God designed them to be done.

In the above Scripture, the Holy Spirit has clearly outlined the basis upon which there can be unity. There is one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God. There can never be a uniting of the religious world when any one of these is believed and accepted in the plural. When one begins to advocate there to be two Gods, he has erected a barrier that will divide himself from those who believe there to be but one God. The same is true with each of these, there is but one.

To begin with, the Holy Spirit declares that we must accept that there is but one body. This fact is emphasized in numerous places throughout the New Testament. Notice the following for example: "But now are they many members, yet but one body." (1 Cor. 12:20). "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body." (Col. 3:15). "And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross." (Eph. 2:16). These, along with numerous other Scriptures, show that God's plan calls for but one body.

Our next point of emphasis is to show that the body and the church are one and the same. Notice from Eph. 1:22-23 that

Christ is "The head over all things to the church, which is his body." In Col. 1:18 a parallel Scripture states, "And he is the head of the body, the church." And in Col. 1:24, "For his body's sake, which is the church." These clearly show that from the Bible view there is no distinction between the body of Christ and the church.

Now let's consider the importance of the one body. In Eph. 2:16 the Bible states that Christ reconciles all unto God "In one body." Outside the body, we are not reconciled unto God, but are enemies. The idea of reconciliation is that of removing the barriers that made us enemies, and thereby bringing us into friendship with God. Therefore being a member of the body of Christ is equivalent to our friendship with God.

A second point stressing the importance of membership in the body of Christ is that of the relationship between the membership and salvation. In Eph. 5:23 the Holy Spirit not only declares that Christ is the head of the church, but that "He is the saviour of the body." Too, in Acts 2:47 we learn that "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." It was the church for which Jesus gave himself (Eph. 5:25). It was the church that Jesus purchased with his blood (Acts 20:28). Our membership in the church is just as important as our salvation. Outside the church we are lost.

My membership in the spiritual body of Christ, the church, depends upon my response to the gospel. In Col. 3:15 we learn that we are called into the one body. In 2 Thess. 2:14 we learn that we are called by the gospel. When we obey the gospel we are made free from sin, and become the servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:17-18). The gospel demands that we believe with all the heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (Acts 8:37; John 8:24), that we repent, turning away from sin and turning to God (Acts 17:30; 26:20), that we confess before others that we believe Jesus to be the Lord and Christ (Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 8:37), and that we be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). It is when we have obeyed the command to be baptized that we are added by the Lord to the one body (Acts 2:40-41, 47; 1 Cor. 12:13).

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Rearing Our Children

By Thomas J. Seay, Jr.

Little children are like molding clay. If they are born into Christian homes, loving hands will immediately begin to fashion those precious pliable little lives into beautiful works of living art. Such ones, at a surprisingly tender age, will expect and insist that heads be carefully bowed and thanks expressed whenever and wherever a table is spread in their presence. They will gleefully ask mommy to read about Jesus before they take their afternoon naps, and their dutiful parents will be seen bringing them to Bible School on the Lord's day and Wednesday, and all other times when their classes meet. That is a happy picture. Both parents and children are blessed.

On the other hand, some unfortunate little children grow up with spiritual neglect. They are sadly neglected in that most pliable period of their life. They never hear an expression of thanksgiving to God at the table. Hence, they have no spirit of gratitude stirred within them. Instead of such little ones asking their mothers to read about Jesus, they are constantly hearing her say, "You little brats clear out of the way." The Bible School is as strange to those little unfortunates as is thanks at the table. Their delinquent parents, like ungrateful swine, sleep late on Sunday morning and thereafter revel in the funny paper, while the precious living clay, which could be so beautifully molded, rapidly hardens into ugly characters to blight the community. Thus, both parents and children become a curse. Lambs do follow the sheep. We pity the lad whose dad is more concerned about his ball game than his offspring. It is pretty hard to convince anyone of your interest in the church be being absent. Do you see that your children are always present at Bible Study every Sunday and Wednesday evening? Or do you teach your children that ball games, trips, outings, company, and other things are more important? It isn't what we tell our children that is so important, but what we show them by our own lives.

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There Is One Body (Cont.)

There can never be unity within our religious world until we begin with the oneness which God designed for this unity. Unless we begin with the fact that there is but one body (one church) there can never be a basis for unity. And unless it is recognized that our membership and service within this one body depends solely upon the guidance of the gospel, and not in any way upon the creeds and doctrines of men, there can never be unity. The complete outline for the church is given within the gospel. Only when men are willing to lay aside their creeds and personal beliefs, and accept what the gospel clearly states, can there be hope for unity.

The Divine Design of The Church

By Caleb J. Kirkpatrick

The wonderfully superior design of God's church to do the work for which he designed it is one of the most convincing proofs of the love of God and of the inspiration of the Bible. When the design of the church set forth in the Bible (its Bible organization, mission, and examples of work) is contrasted with ways men of the past and present have distorted and deformed it, the design in the Bible sparkles as a gem in comparison.

I am not now boasting of myself or my brethren, although I think most of my brethren are good people and most churches of Christ are good churches. They follow the divine design more closely than do others in several fundamental respects; but not one claims perfection. We make mistakes. We are still learning. We are still trying to put into practice the things that are being learned. Much time is properly used in reproving, exhorting, and teaching ourselves. So, we do not boast of ourselves, but we do claim perfection for God's design of the church in the New Testament.

Men have often wanted the church to do things God did not design it to do. They have tried to use it to direct the functions of civil government, and some have united it to government as a state church; but this is not God's design. Men have used churches for social clubs and political action parties. They have made them into institutions to endorse and support their way of life or other sociological theories. Men have used churches to supply rituals by which they could have it ceremonially declared that they were righteous. These are all perversions of God's design. God's church has better purposes.

God designed his church to teach, to save, and to build up people; to transform them into new creatures. It is not designed to be socially exclusive, but rather to save the sinner, to help the poor, the orphan, the sick, the lonely and discouraged; to train members to bear one another's burdens. It is the pillar and ground of the truth, God's missionary and evangelistic association, teaching organization, and benevolence agency. It glorifies God through helping men. There could be no greater or more worthwhile works than those assigned to the church in the Bible.

God's church according to the Bible is wonderfully designed to train men and women to become partakers of the divine nature. It is interested in people for their own good. It is not interested in them for reasons a store is interested in customers, or like a politician whose first interest is in getting elected. It may be compared to a school where the teachers do not work

just for money but because they love the children. It is like a good doctor who gives his time freely to help people who need him.

to gradually develop talents toward true leadership through service. (Matt. 20:25-28) Abilities are developed and polished through experiences in Bible classes, serving at the Lord's table, publically reading the Scriptures and leading prayers, working with people in greeting, visitation, benevolence, mission campaigns, etc. Opportunities to serve are always available.

God's church trains its people in the ways of true leadership by a balanced combination of individual responsibility and personal liberty. (1 Peter 5:3-5) Each Christian shares responsibility but has liberty to work individually and in cooperation with others in accordance with his own personal preferences, talents, and opportunities. Compare this with denominations that use ordained and licensed clergy. In the Lord's church each Christian is "ordained" through the Great Commission, by examples in the Bible, and by the command to love neighbors. The field is the world. The seed is the word. Around the world congregations have been started by military men, teachers, doctors, builders, even by women. Preachers are trained in various ways: like Titus, or Timothy, or Apollos.

The church might be called a team, but the Bible uses a better and more intimate term, a body, with members functioning together for the good of all. (Eph. 4:16) Every member is to be engaged in building up every member through speaking the truth in love, teaching, serving, exhorting, encouraging, and example.

The Bible design of Christ's church emphasizes the worth and dignity of each person along with and enhancing his responsibility. Christ's rules are broad enough for every good thing and narrow enough to point out every wrong, yet free Christians from man-made rules and traditions like Lent and the dietary and ecclesiastical rules of various denominations. Laws in Christ's church are not enforced as in denominations by men called bishops or priests or preachers. Christ's laws work through teaching, example, and persuasion. The Christian does not bow to men as ecclesiastical superiors. Through his own will and through respect for Christ and his fellowman he submits to his brothers and sisters for the good of all. He thus retains his self-respect while serving

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A Better Covenant

By Bill Brumit

A covenant is a solemn, binding agreement between two persons or groups. God has always dealt with men in terms of covenants. We cannot understand God's plan for us today, nor interpret the Bible correctly, without some conception of the different covenants which have been in effect in different periods of history.

After the destruction of the human race by the flood, God chose Abram (later called Abraham) as the progenitor of a unique people, the Israelites. God made a covenant with Abram and promised that his descendants would inherit the land of Palestine. (Gen. 15) He also promised that in Abram all the families of the earth would be blessed. (Gen. 12:3)

Four hundred years later, when the descendants of Abraham had become a great multitude and were enslaved in Egypt, God raised up Moses as their deliverer. Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt to Mt. Sinai, where a covenant between the Lord and Israel was consecrated with the blood of animals, which was called the "blood of the covenant." (Exod. 24:6-8) A large and complex body of law, often called the law of Moses, was given by God to Israel through Moses. This law is found primarily in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, and it became the basis of the religious and civil life of the Jews. It is important to note that the law of Moses as such was given only to Israel (Exod. 20:2), though many universal and eternal principles are embodied in it.

The law of Moses was temporary. Jeremiah spoke of a new covenant which would be made with Israel and Judah. (Jer. 31:31-34) The old covenant was sanctified by the blood of bulls and goats, which could not take away sin. (Heb. 10:4) Furthermore, since the law of Moses was given only to Israel, God's great promise to Abraham that in him all nations of the earth would be blessed remained unfulfilled. The apostle Paul emphasizes that the law was a tutor to lead us to Christ. (Gal. 3:24)

In Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, the old covenant was fulfilled and the new was inaugurated. As he instituted the Lord's Supper, Jesus said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood." (1 Cor. 11:25) The writer of the book of Hebrews explains in great detail how Christ is superior in every way to the Mosaic law. Paul boldly states that if we seek to be justified by the law, we have fallen from grace (Gal. 5:4) but if we are in Christ the promise to Abraham is fulfilled in us. (Gal. 3:8, 9)

We are justified by the covenant of Christ, which was sanctified by his blood, not the old covenant of Moses. The terms, conditions, and promises of the new covenant are found in that part of the Bible known as the New Testament (the word "testament" means covenant). Only in the New Testament do we find how to become a Christian, how to worship God acceptably, how the church is to be organized, and how the Christian life is to be lived.

Many religious people do not understand this distinction. They are as likely to turn to Leviticus as Acts in order to find out what to do to be saved. They mistakenly look to the Old Testament for support of such practices as Sabbath (Saturday) keeping, infant baptism, a special priesthood, use of incense and instrumental music in worship, and the like.

To say that we are no longer under the covenant of Moses is not to minimize in any way the inspiration and authority of the Old Testament. It is inspired of God (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:20, 21), and it was given for our instruction. But the Old Testament must always be understood in the light of the New Testament. The covenant of Christ is the blazing reality, while the covenant of Moses, as important as it was in God's plan, was only a shadow or type of that reality. We should continue to use the Old Testament as a source of truth, strength, and example, but the New Testament alone is our final authority in matters of faith and practice. Jesus is the guarantee of a "better covenant." (Heb. 7:22) To return to the old and inferior would be tragic.

The Devine Design (Cont.)

others. He is appreciated and respected in return.

While individual responsibility is stressed in Christ's church it is not a crushing responsibility because in every case it is shared, shared with brothers and sisters and with Christ. Elders cannot shift their responsibility to a higher human headquarters, but they can ask for help from other elders and members. There is no bureaucracy or red tape to bother them. They can act in the confidence that the laws of Christ cannot be overturned by men. Responsibility is helped by liberty and love, and protected by shared checks and balances.

Take time to pray - it is the greatest power on earth.

Are You "Anti" or "Liberal"?

By Glynn V. Purdy

These terms, "Anti" and "Liberal", are not used here in derision, but simply for clarification. We are told by many that we must be classified by one of these two terms, for we cannot straddle the fence. For many years the Lord's people have been told by the denominations that we must be either "Jew, Catholic, or Protestant." We are neither! A few years ago an ex-elder and another man came to my house to talk. These two, along with a few others, had pulled out from the church in another town, and had "joined the anti" movement. After talking for some time, one of them asked me to "declare" with them. I told them that I would "declare" only with the Lord.

WHAT DOES ANTI MEAN? It means, against or opposed to, and in this religious sense it means to leave off that which God authorizes or commands. It means to forbid what God commands. God commanded the Jewish apostles to preach and baptize all nations, yet they refused. They "Forbid" water baptism to the Gentiles until Acts 10. The Bible furnishes us unto "All good works" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17), and we are not to add to or take from these "Good works."

WHAT DOES LIBERAL MEAN? This is opposite to anti. The liberal will add to God's word and do things that God forbids. Both the anti and liberals take liberties with God's word that God does not approve. Brotherhood wise, the liberal is the greatest danger to the church today. They are still "among" us. The "Anti" has been pretty well identified, and is separate today, so this makes the danger much less. Most liberalism is taken from the denominations, since many of our people want "To be like the nations around us."

The question is still not answered: What are you? Several years ago I was in a meeting in Kansas City, Mo. While there, one of the members asked me which we were (what was I and the church there). I told him that I obeyed the gospel and was added to the Lord's church several years before I ever heard of "Anti" or "Liberal" and that I had never supported or joined either, so I was neither. I still believe that and believe that I can prove it from the Bible.

WERE THE APOSTLES "ANTI" OR LIBERAL? Remember, the church in the New Testament times, "Continued

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Are You "Anti" or (Cont.)

To Walk In The Light

By James Knight

steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine." (Acts 2:42) Were they fence straddlers? They did ALL that God commanded and no more. They added nothing to God's word and took nothing away. There were no separate groups of "Antis" and "Liberals". Was it possible for them to exist without "declaring" with one of the groups? Of course, for these, like the denominations, were not in existence. The early church walked in "The way". They were not trying to straddle the fence. Everyone today who is walking in "The way" by Continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine is neither "Anti" nor "Liberal". Those who are adding to the word of God, or taking away from the word of God are not "Straddling the fence" they have jumped it and are no longer in "The way". To leave off a "Good work" that God has commanded is wrong. To add man-conceived works, which God did not include in his "Good works" is wrong. I am not, I have never been, and with God's help, I will never be in the class with the "Anti" or the "Liberal". I am not straddling the fence either. There is NO FENCE in "The way". There is a "Fence" of God's word on either side of "The way" and we dare not cross it to the right nor to the left. I can be a member of the Lord's church, walk in "The way", and go to heaven; without being, as the denominations use the term, "Either Catholic, Protestant, or Jew." I can do the same and neither be "Anti" or "Liberal." So don't let anyone tell you that you have to "declare" with one of these two groups. There is ANOTHER group who are walking in the light of the way, who are happy to include ALL of God's GOOD WORKS, but no more.

Take time to think - it is the source of power.

Take time to play - it is the secret of perpetual youth.

Take time to read - it is the foundation of wisdom.

Take time to love and be loved - it is a God-given privilege.

Take time to be friendly - it is the road to happiness.

Take time to laugh - it is the music of the soul.

Take time to give - it is too short a day to be selfish.

Prominent in many conversations among modern men are the words, "I see nothing wrong with that." These words usually preface the mention of some immoral or dishonest activity. As Paul warns the Ephesians to beware of false, invalid, and unchristian ideas, so he writes to the Colossians with this direction: "Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." (Col. 2:8)

Rank humanism evidence itself in the words, "Well, I see nothing wrong with that." Man prides himself in the full ordering of his own life and becomes law unto himself, that is, until that course leads to moral and mental bankruptcy. The Christian must "take heed" watching carefully for "empty words" that are so often used to justify immoral conduct. Alcoholism, narcotic addiction, continued sexual impurity, corrupt personal and business standards result from our failure to counter the crowd, critically examine the philosophy in vogue at the moment, and make our own decisions on the basis of God's word.

Paul urged Christians at Ephesus to make positive contributions to the evil society that surrounded them. Listen as he counseled, "For ye were once darkness, but are now light (for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth), proving what is well-pleasing unto the Lord: and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them; for the things which are done by them in secret it is a shame even to speak of. But all things when they are reprov'd are made manifest by the light; for everything that is made manifest is light." (Eph. 5:8-13)

Christ called his followers "sons of the light" suggesting a source outside themselves for this light. (Luke 16:8) John wrote, "And this is the message which we have heard from him and announce unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." (1 John 1:5) John continues in the same passage by stating the impossibility of fellowship with God while one is in darkness - the darkness of sin - and suggests that by walking in the light we enjoy fellowship with God, with other Christians, and above all, "the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1:6-7) To be of the light, to walk in the light, is to obey Christ, and to become a genuine

disciple of Christ, the consequences of which like Paul discusses in 1 Thess. 5, where he says; "Ye are all sons of light, and sons of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober . . . but let us, since we are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation." (1 Thess. 5:5-8)

The positive contributions which Christians make to their society are goodness, righteousness, and truth - "the fruit of the light" - and are opposed to the fruit of darkness - reveling, drunkenness, wantonness, strife, and jealousy. (Eph. 5:9; Rom. 13:13) Paul teaches that the Christian life is the one sure argument for the superiority of God's way versus man's varying ways. The life of the Christian proves "what is well-pleasing unto the Lord." (Eph. 5:10) At the same time the Christian must "have no fellowship" with evil but rather "reprove" it. (Eph. 5:11) The Christian, by his very nature as "light" will (1) clarify evil's true nature, (2) expose darkness by light, and (3) observe the change to light. Paul's words are, "But all things when they are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for everything that is made manifest is light." (Eph. 5:13)

Take time to work - it is the price of success.

