

The Church of God

United Under Christ



by

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THE CHURCH OF GOD—UNITED . . . UNDER CHRIST

by Frank M. Walker

"There is a way which seemeth right unto man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."
Proverbs 14:12

Have we lost the keys to true Christian unity in the Churches of God? Jesus gave them to the early church and they were used successfully for 100 years after He ascended to heaven. The Book of Acts gives us 32 years of inspired church history. Truly the Church was a glorious church during that period. They had unity "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul; . . . with great power gave the apostles witness . . . ; and great grace was upon them all." Acts 4:31-35 "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Acts 2:42-47 "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" Acts 5:14. They had everything that the church needs today. They had the unity, they had the power for service and a great missionary work that is a model for all times.

Unity is a must in the true Church of God. Jesus prayed for it in John 17th chapter. "That they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." John 17:21-23. The key to real Christian unity is found in John 13:34-35. Jesus' own command "Love one another as

I have loved you." This love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Romans 5:5.

It will be noted that the very same power for service (the Holy Spirit) that enabled the Apostles and other leaders to perform miracles and to preach the Word with "great power," also filled all the members with love so that they were of "One heart and one soul." Acts 4:29-35. Unity was God given, not man made. God "tempered the body (Church) together. . . . That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; . . ." 1 Cor. 12:24-26 To better understand the true church and its unity as revealed in the New Testament Scriptures, two questions need to be answered.

First — WHAT IS THE TRUE CHURCH?

The second question is, **What type of organization did it have?** Did Jesus establish a general organization, with authorized officers to control and regulate the church in general so that they would all be united? Did the early church of the Book of Acts have any general organization? Did they have an earthly head that directed or was Jesus Christ the only Head of the Church? All of these questions need a Bible answer and the New Testament record gives the answers. First however—

WHAT IS THE TRUE CHURCH OF GOD?

Is it some organization that must be joined? A few texts of Scripture will clear this up. 1 Tim. 3:15 ". . . That thou mayest know how that thou oughtest to

behave thyself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Here the church is called the house of God and in Eph. 2:19 it is further defined to be "The household of God." In short the true church is made up of God's household or "Family" on earth. Eph. 3:14, 15, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Gal. 3:26. So it isn't a matter of belonging to some organization but it is a matter of becoming and remaining children of God so that the spirit of adoption from the Father will enter and remain in our hearts. Please read Rom. 8:14-17.

The church is illustrated as the body of Christ repeatedly and we are individually members of that one body. "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." 1 Cor. 12:27. "The head of every man is Christ" 1 Cor. 11:3. "For ye are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones." Eph. 5:30. God has but one family or church, and Paul says "There is one body (church), and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." Eph. 4:1-4. Since the church is illustrated as the body of Christ, and since our own physical body has only one head which controls the entire body, how about the church? Who is the one Head of that body? "And gave him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is his body, . . ." Eph. 1:22, 23. This leaves no room for any other head or agency of control, be it general organization or what have you, to rule over the family of God. God gave Jesus to be head over the church in all things.

How do we become children of God and thus become members of the true church? Who adds the members to this one body? "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into

one body (church), whether we be Jews or Gentiles . . . " 1 Cor. 12:13. "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" Acts 2:47. "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Gal. 3:26. Rom. 6:17, 18. The church is a great **Spiritual Organism** and only as individuals meet the gospel requirements, will the Holy Spirit add us to that organism and witness that we are the children of God. Since the body is one—there is unity through the One Head that controls each member. ". . . For ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Gal. 3:28.

Is there a general assembly and where is the record kept of the membership? Answer: In the Book of life in heaven. "To the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven . . ." Heb. 12:23, Phil. 4:3, Rev. 3:5. In this general assembly with headquarters in heaven, are there any organized groups on earth, local or otherwise? Answer: Yes, there are **local assemblies** or churches, just as there were in New Testament times. For examples—There was the Church of God at Corinth made up of those who were sanctified in Christ. 1 Cor. 1:2. There was the Church in Ephesus and the Churches in Galatia etc. In each place the local assembly is spoken of as **the Church of God** in that particular place. Even in Rev. 1st, 2nd and 3rd chapters, the messages were addressed to each **local church** as a unit and Christ was shown in the midst of them, Rev. 1:11-20. Now we are ready for the second question—

---What **Type of Organization** did the early Church have? Did Jesus establish any general organization in the church with officers authorized to direct and control the general assembly of the Churches of God? Did the church in the Book of Acts have

any general organization?

Answer: **Jesus did not establish any such thing** as we now know as a general organization in the church. There was no general organization that ruled over the churches in the book of Acts. There is **no divine authority** in the New Testament Scriptures for any general organization to direct and control the activities of the local assemblies of the church in general. Christ Jesus is the **one and only general Head** of the church. He is the One who directed and kept the workers united. It was a God given unity working in leaders and local assemblies that made the early church such a glorious church.

There is divine authority for organizing or setting in order the local churches, but absolutely none for a general organization to rule over God's family on earth. The idea of such a plan in the Church of God is contrary to the Scriptures. Jesus said, "Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister." Mark 10:42-44 ". . . for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." Matt. 23:8

UNITY UNDER CHRIST—WITHOUT A GENERAL ORGANIZATION.

The Book of Acts gives us a picture of real unity under Christ without any general organization such as we know today. Yes, they had unity with "Local Autonomy" or congregational government. The Bible and history both verify this as a fact. Now for the proof. The Bible teaches that the

"General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn" are written in heaven. Heb. 12:23. The foundation of that church "... the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone," Eph. 2:20. Even in establishing the local church at Corinth, Jesus was the foundation. 1 Cor. 3:10, 11.

It was **local autonomy** in the **Book of Acts**. For example, It was "the church which was in Jerusalem" that sent Barnabas on a missionary trip as far as Antioch, Acts 11:19-26. It was to the local church "that was at Antioch" that the "Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul (Paul) for the work whereunto I have called them." "And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed..." Acts 13:1-4. Later on they came back to Antioch and reported how God had blessed their ministry among the Gentiles. Acts 14:25-28 Please note that neither the twelve apostles, nor the church at Jerusalem had anything to do with this missionary project. It was the **local church at Antioch**. This was the beginning of a great missionary project among the Gentiles.

The local church at Jerusalem was the center of a great missionary project among the Jews. Two great missionary projects launched and directed by the One Head, Jesus Christ through the agency of the Holy Spirit, but neither group had control over the other, nor was there any general organization to "oversee" or "control" the two great evangelistic efforts.

Let us follow Paul and Barnabas more closely in this evangelistic work. What was their custom about organization? Answer: After establishing a church in certain cities they returned later and "... ordained them

elders in every church." Acts 14:21-23. In short they set in order the local churches, ordaining elders and such other officers as may have been needed. The elders in each church were ordained of God to feed and oversee the local assembly. Read Acts 20:17, 18-28. —But not as lords... 1 Pet. 5:1-4

Paul left Titus in Crete, "That thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting ("left undone"), and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:" Titus 1:5. Here again it was a matter of setting in order or organizing the local churches, not a general organization.

A local assembly of brethren was "the Church of God" in that particular place. In short they were the "family" of God. If an individual moved to another city, he was recognized as a member in that city, being a child of God, he was really a member in any local assembly where he chanced to be.

Paul wrote his letters to local churches with never a hint of any General Organization with headquarters at Jerusalem. For examples the two letters to the Church at Corinth were addressed "To the Church of God at Corinth." To the brethren in Galatia "unto the Church of Galatia. To Ephesus he wrote, "To the saints which are at Ephesus," 1 Cor. 1:1-2, Gal. 1:1-2, Eph. 1:1-2 He wrote to each local church according to the local needs.

Paul's support came not from a "General Treasury" but from the local church supporting him. Phil. 4:11-16. The offering for the poor saints at Jerusalem reveals a cooperating spirit of love among the local churches, but this also started at Antioch and not Jerusalem. Read Acts 11:29-30. The Gentile Churches were very faithful in this. Rom. 15:25-28, 1 Cor. 16:1-5, 2 Cor.

9:1-7. Note that Paul made his appeal to each local assembly or church. While there was cooperation and united effort in these and other phases of God's work; yet there was no general organization to supervise and control. Paul admonished the churches in his area of labor and they willingly responded.

Even in the Book of Revelation, the messages are addressed "to the seven churches which are in Asia" Rev. 1:11, 20, and were addressed to each one as a unit.

NOTES FROM HISTORY

From The Growth of the Christian Church—Ancient and Medieval Christianity by Robert Hastings Nichols. Vol. 1, P. 25 F on "The Government of the Church," quote, "All the earliest churches were independent and self-governing. The Christians held that they all belonged to one universal church, for all were one in Christ. But there was no general organization having control over the scattered churches. In the first century there was no organized government of the whole church. Each congregation managed its own affairs in freedom."

This is very plain and to the point. Human organization of the general body of believers came in the second and third centuries.

More history: "There was among primitive Christians a uniform belief that Jesus was the Christ and a perfect harmony of affection. When congregations multiplied so that they become too numerous to assemble in one place, they parted into separate companies, again and again, but there was no schism; on the contrary all held a common union, and a member of

one company was member of all.

One company never pretended to inspect the affairs of another, nor was there any dominion or any shadow of dominion over the consciences of any individuals."—Robinson's Researches, Chapter 8.

Of the second century we read. "If this century many unnecessary rites and ceremonies were added to the Christian worship, the introduction of which was extremely offensive to wise and good men." Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History 2nd Chap. Neander's Church History Page 84, tells us that many counterfeit christians came in and brought with them "heathenish crimes" and that the outward form of the church was also changed.

Mosheim's Church History reveals further how that human organization and federation of the local churches came in along with the great apostasy from the true faith. I quote a few extracts. "During the greater part of this century the Christian Churches were independent of each other; nor were they joined together by association confederacy, or any other bonds but those of charity. Each assembly was a little state, governed by its own laws . . . But in process of time all the Christian churches of a province were formed into one large ecclesiastical body which, like confederate states, assembled at certain times, in order to deliberate about the whole. This institution had its origin among the Greeks, with whom nothing was more common than the confederation of independent states. "These ecclesiastical associations . . . became universal." "These councils, of which we find the smallest trace before the middle of this century, changed the whole face of the church, and gave it a new form; for by them the

ancient privileges of the people were considerably diminished, and the power and authority of the bishops greatly augmented." (Note: The last three quotations from History are taken from "Which is the True Church" by E. E. Franke).

In due time the historical record reveals that the church took on the appearance of a "Vast Republic" formed by a great number of little states combining together. They created a new order of ecclesiastics who were appointed in different parts of the world as heads of the churches in their area. Their office work was to preserve the unity of the immense body. They were called Patriarchs. Human ambition and apostasy led to the establishment of a chief Patriarch or "Pope." Thus the church finally became a great "Spiritual Monarchy." Church authority through the councils of these confederacies entered quite early into this human system. They soon claimed authority to make laws or rules for the churches etc. In short, Human organization or confederacies of the churches had its rise with the great apostasy and was part of it, the very heart of it. It was their assumed authority in their church councils that gave us all the false doctrines that came from Rome. The church was the authority instead of the Word of God. They had an earthly head instead of the **One that God appointed**, the **Lord Jesus**.

Some Questions Answered

1. Did Israel exist as a local government or were they a national church?

Answer: They were a "holy Nation." Exodus 19:6.

2. Does 1 Pet. 2:9 mean that the church

today must be organized on a national basis as was Israel?

Answer: No! Such was **not** the case in the New Testament Church. We are "A holy Nation" and we are also called "A spiritual house." v. 5 We have been delivered from the power of darkness and "translated into the Kingdom of His dear Son." Col. 1:13 Christ rules in our hearts, dwelling there through the agency of the Holy Spirit. There is no super organization on earth, national, nor international to which we must belong.

3. Was Israel only a national organization, or were their rules and laws international?

Answer: They were a national organization but God gave them righteous laws that were international in that **all men** were to **obey them**. Num. 15: 15, 16 Israel was to be a light to the Gentile world, just as the church is to be a light to the world today.. Phil 2:15, 16 . Each local church, as at Philippi, was to be a light as part of that great Spiritual Kingdom of which **Christ is Head**. Brethren these Scriptures do not prove a General Organization for the church. The fact is that in Elijah's day there were only some 7000 members of God's true church in all those Ten Tribes of Israel. They had no organization, but were so scattered among the multitudes that Elijah thought that he was alone.

4. When Christ came and set up His work, did He organize several local churches; or was He concerned about a world organization? Did He appoint the twelve Apostles for one local church?

Answer: The Bible Truth is that Jesus did not **organize one local church, nor did He organize any "World organization"** such

as we know today. He was interested in a world wide evangelistic program as is revealed in the command, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel" Mark 16:15, 16, Matt. 28:19-20, Matt. 10:16-18. No super world organization was established to carry out this work. The first 150 years of church history reveals, that, **true to God's plan, Jesus was Head over the church in all things.** The **evangelism** was directed by the "other Comforter" that Jesus sent in His Name. The Book of Acts tells of two great missionary projects, one starting from Jerusalem with Peter and others in the lead; and the second starting from Antioch with Paul and Barnabas leading out. There was unity in the one great purpose and mission of the church under the direction of the Holy Spirit. No General World Organization was needful.

The twelve Apostles were appointed to be witnesses of Christ and His ministry and to leave us the inspired record of the same. For proof read Acts 1:21-26. They were eye witnesses of Christ before and after His Resurrection. They gave us the Gospel as Jesus taught it Matt. 24:14, Heb. 2:1-3. We are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus himself being the **chief Corner Stone.** Eph. 2:20. To Israel it was said, "They have Moses and the Prophets: let them hear them." Luke 16:29. Moses and the Prophets were dead, but Israel still had their inspired Word of Christ, the Apostles and Prophets. Christ Jesus is the Very Heart of the Gospel.

The twelve Apostles fulfilled their work. The church still has them in the same way that Israel had Moses and the Prophets. They are **foundation stones** in the church.

They confirmed the Word of Christ to us. Heb. 2:1-3. They were never ordained to be part of a **super organization** and have **successors to rule over the Churches of God.** In the Kingdom to come the Apostles will sit "on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel," but they are **not on thrones today ruling over the church.** The 70 were sent out on missionary work and reported back to the One and only Head of the church, Jesus the Christ. Read Luke 10:1-21.

5. Paul preached the gospel as was revealed to him by the Lord Jesus, why then after 17 years did he go up by revelation to Jerusalem? Was it needful? Why did he say "Lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain?" Gal. 2:1-2

Answer: Let us find the trouble here that caused Paul to go up to Jerusalem for a conference with the Apostles and leaders at the local church at Jerusalem. This was not a **general organization**, called a conference, but certain brethren conferring together about certain problems in the gospel work. Read Gal. 2:1-10. Did Paul go up, after 17 years of successfully preaching the gospel among the Gentiles and establishing churches in various cities, to join a General Organization that Jesus had established to oversee His church? Had Paul neglected to "join the organization"? Was he too independant? Was that why his work or labor was in danger of being in vain? Some would have us believe this was the trouble. Read the Galatian letter and find the real Bible reason for this conference with the Apostles at Jerusalem.

Remember that Paul did not receive his Gospel from the Apostles, but by revelation of Jesus himself. Gal. 1:11-12, 15-17. After three years he went up to see Peter

for 15 days. v. 18. Then 14 years later it became needful to go up for a conference with the Apostles at Jerusalem. Gal. 2:1, 2. During these 17 years he was a stranger by face to the churches in Judea. Gal. 1: 22-24.

The trouble that caused him to go to Jerusalem to see the Apostles and Elders really originated and came from members of the churches in Judea, Jerusalem in particular. The Jerusalem leaders admitted "... that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, ye must be circumcised and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment." Acts 15:23, 24. Read also verses 25-29. The Gentile brethren in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia were being led astray by certain teachers from the local church in Jerusalem. They were teaching circumcision and obedience to the law of Moses. This reached its climax at the local church at Antioch. Read Acts 14: 26-28 and Acts 15:1, 2. This was no general conference of the churches at all; but the local church at Antioch sent Paul, Barnabas and certain others up to the Apostles and Elders of the local church at Jerusalem. Read Acts 15:1-6 carefully.

This subverting of souls by brethren from Judea is what made it needful for Paul to get together with the inspired Apostles and the Elders at Jerusalem. If brethren were led astray Paul would have run or laboured in vain. See Phil. 2:14-16.

Now note a few points in the Galatian letter. This teaching of circumcision and obedience to the law of Moses was causing trouble there. Some were perverting the gospel. Gal. 1:6, 7. Certain false brethren came in to spy out their liberty in Christ. Gal. 2:3-5. See also Gal. 3:1-5, Gal. 4:10,

19-21, Gal. 5:1-4. Paul was preaching the Gospel in truth as Christ gave it to him but those false brethren from Judea were perverting it, threatening to do untold damage to his ministry. Christ is not divided. There must be unity and is in the message Jesus gave.

So they went to Jerusalem for a conference with the Apostles and Elders. The Apostles were inspired men and so were Paul and Barnabas. The result of this conference was that "They added nothing" to Paul, but confirmed the very gospel that Paul preached. They also gave Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship "... That we should go to the heathen and they unto the circumcision." Gal. 2:5-9. They not only confirmed the gospel that Paul had already preached, but at the same time they sent letters to the Gentile brethren in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia regarding the doctrine and work of those trouble makers, thus confirming those brethren in the very Gospel that Paul had preached to them. Read Acts 15:22-28, 29, 6. What happened at this conference? Acts 15.

Answer: Decisions were made by Spirit filled men, with the whole church. vv. 22, 23. Decrees were made by inspired Apostles and letters written to those churches involved in the problem at hand. vv. 24-29

7. Were all churches subject to those decrees or did each local church make its own rules on the matter? If each local church made its own rules, and was not subject to decisions made in the conference, what right did this assembly at Jerusalem have to send out the Apostles to deliver "the decree for to keep" Acts 16:4 that was ordained by the Apostles and Elders at Jerusalem? Was this united effort a

good thing?

Answer: Of course all the local churches obeyed those decrees. It settled or confirmed those churches in the very Gospel Paul had already preached to them. Acts 15:41, Acts 16:4-5. These brethren were men with authority to make such "decrees" under the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit. So those decrees made there were final. They are as good for us today as they were then. They were really decrees of the Holy Spirit. Acts 15:28, 29. Their decisions set the people straight about the Law of Moses and the Gospel of Christ. This is part of the very foundation of the church, the "Apostles doctrine."

Every local church must be subject to those decrees, but nothing in this entire record teaches that this was a general organization ordained of God to continue as a decree making body down through the centuries ruling over the churches by rules, or decrees, etc. The decrees made there in Acts 15 were no different than what Paul had been preaching for 17 years, without being subject to any general organization.

Both the New Testament Scripture and history prove that no general confederacy or organization existed in the early churches of God. They were one in Christ the only authorized Head of the church. God used Spirit filled men as leaders and there was unity. All the rules were given by Christ and the Apostles. Ours is to teach and obey those rules not to make more. Human organization and authority has been a curse instead of a blessing in the church. They have divided God's children instead of uniting them.

The very nature of the questions above

are misleading, because they imply a general organization that did not exist. They also imply that "Local Autonomy" means that every church makes its own rules with no divine rules for each to follow. God has given the rules already for each and every local church to follow. The decrees in Acts 15 are part of them. Every local church with its elders must obey those God-given rules. They are under the direction of the One Head. They have One Lord, and One Faith, One hope, and One Father in Heaven. Eph. 4:1-4. They do not need some super organization to make them one in Christ.

Cooperative organizations may exist as tools to help carry out certain phases of missionary activities of general interest to churches in certain regions, large or small, but never with authority to rule over the local churches. Local autonomy does not mean division, if it is practiced as it was in New Testament times. "A member of one church was a member of all." So history records. The Book of Acts teaches the same and there was unity, with local autonomy and without any general organization such as we know today. A great missionary work under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, working unitedly in their various fields of labor. They were "one in Christ." Gal. 3:16-28.

8. How about the officers spoken of in Eph. 4:10-16? Were they for local churches or were they representing the one Body of Christ in the World?

Answer: Read these verses carefully and prayerfully. Were these officers part of some general organization? Read verses 8, 11, 12. These were gifted men, placed in their respective offices by the One Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. Their combined

responsibility was "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ," vv. 11-12. The whole body must be fitly joined together v. 16. The Apostles and Prophets gave us the inspired Word of God, and are thus our foundation with Christ as the Chief Corner Stone. Eph. 2:20 No one can fill the office of one of the Twelve Apostles today, because no one can meet the qualifications as given in Acts 1: 21-26. They were eyewitnesses of Christ before and after His resurrection. We have their testimony in the New Testament. They fulfilled their mission in the church. They were given a work to do, that no successor could do. They were not given an office in the church that must be filled by successors down through these 19 centuries.

Note that Paul emphasizes the fact that every member was to "grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." Eph. 4:15, Eph. 1:22, 23. In Eph. 4:11, we have Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers as living officers in the churches. There were also prophets. The twelve Apostles fulfilled their work and are foundation stones in the church. Was this a list of officers in a general organization? No, it was not. Pastors and teachers are usually elders and leaders in their respective local churches. Evangelists, such as Paul and Barnabas, usually work to make new converts, establishing local churches in new fields and also to help establish the local churches in the faith. Holding revivals to strengthen local brethren and to enlarge the local church membership is a definite part of their ministry. Cooperative support should flow freely from churches established by the evangelists to keep them active

in the work whereunto they are called. A close study of Paul's ministry and letters to the churches bears out this fact.

Local Autonomy and Unity in Christ. How?

Question: How does the church function together?

Answer: It functions as one body in Christ. "So we, being many, are one body Christ, and every one members one of another" Rom. 12:4-8. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free

... for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Gal. 3:26-28. "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ . . . Having then gifts differing . . ." Please note that Paul wrote this to the local church at Rome. The same was taught the local church at Corinth in 1 Cor. 12:12-14. At Ephesus it was the same. Eph. 4:4-16. The individual members were all one in Christ Jesus and all the different gifts were to be exercised with one purpose under the direction of the Holy Spirit. This made for unity in the local assemblies and unity of the assemblies or churches as they labored together in Lord Jesus.

Question: If each local church is a government by itself and makes its own rules separate from the main body, who is the foot, the nose or the eye; and how can they function together as one body, or how can it be said that there is no schism in the body? Read 1 Cor. 12:12-25

Answer: Local autonomy did not mean a lot of separate fighting bodies going in different directions in the 32 years of church history in the Book of Acts. They were one in Christ Jesus. Each local church was established upon the "Principles of the doctrine of Christ" Heb. 6:

1-3. Paul preached the same gospel that Peter preached. The basic rules of life that Jesus taught were taught to every church and every individual in every church. That was their foundation. Eph. 2:20, Rom. 1:16 Paul and Apollos were both ministers of the same God. They were labourers together with God. The church is God's building with only one foundation 1 Cor. 3:4-12. Whether it was a Gentile church established by Paul or Apollos, or a Jewish Assembly established by Peter, James and John, they were all taught the pure gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. None of them were left to make their own rules on things vital to salvation. They were taught them first by the evangelist who established the church.

When set in order the local elders were to "feed the Church of God" over the which the Holy Spirit made them overseers. Acts 20:27, 28. This admonition was given the Elders from Ephesus. So long as Christ was the Head there was unity but when brethren divided loyalty and began to say "I am of Paul and I am of Apollos" there was carnality and division. 1 Cor. 3:4 Jesus said "All ye are brethren," a fact that we must recognize in the true church.

They recognized that fact and love bound them all together in the early history of the church. They had one Head, the Lord Jesus. They were bound together by a common bond of charity and a member of all. They were not bound together by a confederacy or human organization. The same can work today and it is working with many, who recognize that human organizations have divided God's children. There is a longing in mens hearts to remove those man made barriers.

Why set at naught thy brother because he doesn't belong to "your church?" If he belongs to Christ, he is your brother.

The fact that history says that each local church made its own laws or rules does not mean that they were divided in basic doctrines nor does it mean that the different local churches did not work together in missionary activity. The Book of Acts and early church history tell the same story of a united universal church—by a bond of love and unity in basic doctrines. Also the Book of Acts gives a wonderful picture of united missionary effort under One Head. The rules made by each local group regulated their local methods of worship, etc. For example, a man might have a large family of married sons. These sons are all loyal to the father's training and endeavor to rear their families accordingly. They are all zealous for the moral principles their father taught them, but details of conducting strictly family affairs will vary some in each home. This may be especially true if they are living in widely separated sections of the nation. Yet, they are one in loyalty to their father's teachings and in love for each other. The same was true of the family (church) of God at Corinth and the family of God at Jerusalem etc. Oh, yes they worked together for their Father in heaven. Peter went down and preached at Corinth some and the Church at Corinth joined other Gentile churches in sending relief to the poor Saints at Jerusalem 1 Cor. 16:1-4

The command to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" requires cooperation or fellowship of the local churches. This fellowship can be carried out, with or without an organization. But must be carried out, especially

where local groups are small, it is very needful to pool a portion of our efforts and finances in the support of evangelists and publishing work etc. Even in helping small groups to support a pastor should be in order if we are really one in Christ Jesus.

Question Did Paul say that following certain men rather than the church was carnal? 1 Cor. 3:1-7

Answer: No, Paul did not say it that way. He taught the Corinthian Church that they belonged to Christ. 1 Cor. 3:21-23 Paul and Apollos were only to be counted as ministers by whom they had believed v. 4-9 Loyalty must be to Christ, not to man, even though they may be true servants of God. 1 Cor. 12:25-27, 1 Cor. 11:1. By following the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the head of the church, there will be unity in the church. Read 1 Cor. 1:10-13 and 1 Cor. 3:1-7. This was not a matter of following man instead of the Church, but it was a matter of idolizing the man instead of the Christ that each man had taught. They were carnal and divided the church. In this case neither Paul nor Apollos wanted to divide God's family to get a following. Paul gives a strong rebuke that should be an example for all Spirit filled ministers today.

Brethren there is a lesson here for the Churches of God today. It is carnal (sinful) to cause the family or Church of God to be broken up into factions.

Loyalty to this organization and that one, to this minister and that one, so that we are setting at naught our brother for whom Christ died, and by the many factions we disgrace the Holy Name of our Saviour "Christ did not establish anything such as we now know as an organization

and membership in it is not and has never been a requirement of salvation. This being true it therefore follows that no organization is vested with any divine authority. The first believers had all things in common—not because any council had so decreed, but because they desired to work together."

(Page 7. Doctrinal Differences Between The Seventh-Day Church of God and the Seventh-Day Adventists, Published by the Church of God Pub. House, Stanberry, Mo.)

My dear friends and brethren the above quotations is true, very true. Why don't we recognize this fact, throw down man made walls that stand between us, accept and live the fact that "We are one in Christ Jesus."

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