

The Remnant

*“Even so then at this
present time also there
is a remnant according to
the election of grace.”
Romans 11.5*

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CAUSATIVE PREDESTINARIANISM?

By Elder Stanley C. Phillips

(Editor’s note: Elder Phillips wrote the following in answer to a question as to whether or not he “agreed with Elder Sylvester Hassell’s view that predestination was non-causative and permissive.”)

First, if I thought that predestination was the *cause of all things*, I would worship him, her, or it. Obviously, then, I believe the eternal Godhead is the *cause of all things*. Therefore I hope I worship Him. “Predestination” is a noun that **describes** a **concept**, as no other word brought from the Latin is able to do. Before William Tyndale visited Martin Luther at Marburg, Germany, the word to describe that peculiar concept was not found in the English tongue. Hence, in his earlier translations, he somewhat blundered into various expressions to say what he wanted to convey. In Jude 4, “*before of old*” expresses the concept. In Acts, “*determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*” was used where the exact same word which he later translated “predestinated” is used.

The concept being expressed is that God’s determinant counsel has “before of old,” included all thing that were, are, and will come to pass. “Predestination” is the word Luther, and later Tyndale, selected to express that concept. Now, I will elaborate on it, and I do not care whether anyone agrees with me or not.

“But He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? And what His soul desireth, even that He doeth” (Job

23:13) expresses a principle part of **that concept**, and Job found it a much needed comfort for him. Predestination of all things is an over-powering comfort for a sorely tried saint; but a so-called “limited predestination” (an oxymoron) is of no value nor comfort for even those that express a belief in it. “*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and for ever* (Hebrews 13:8)”; and “*Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us* (Hebrews 6:17, 18).” The immutability, or changelessness, of God, and His oath, is designed for the comfort of His tried children, and this immutability is part and parcel of the **concept** of which we are writing. For it to be for our comfort is expressed in the Old Testament, “*For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed,*” (Malachi 3:6), and so I suppose that if God were to change, Jacob would be in a terrible fix! as we also would certainly be.

Another aspect of this **concept** is in the fullness of His consistency of all things: “*For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.*” (Col. 1:16,17). Again, “*In Him, we live and move and have our being.*”

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Taken together, that is absolute, as absolute as anything can be; and the word "predestination," is the assigned word for that concept in the post-Tyndale English language.

To deny the absoluteness of predestination, Arminians have to (1) ignore it—which most do; or (2) deny it outright—and again, the rest do that; or, (3) undermine it in some modifications—and Satan is the author of this trick of the mind. First, to attempt to use the word without its concept, all one needs to do is deny that "all things" are created by Him, and for Him, or is working together in some pattern or other for the good of God's elect; and totally separate mortals from the "all things that consist," thus alienating humans from the dominion of God. By denying eternal oneness of Christ with His church, or body, (eternal vital union,) they can note that Luther and Tyndale's choice word "*predestination*" is only used six times in the Greek New Testament, and only four of them refer to God's "poor little ol' disobedient children." Now, they eliminate the "all things" which "predestination" uses from the sphere of all human existence, except a few that ever believe on Christ. In so doing, they devastate the **concept** into rags, torn, and valueless. They become themselves, mere agnostics in the realm of religion. They are not only denying "predestination," but they are compelled thereby to deny His absolute and endless dominion of the universe; of His divine providence in daily deliverances; and so fragment the totality of Truth and to virtually deny it all.

In writing more directly to your question, I would point out there are so many, including yourself, that deny "God is the first cause of all causes." Only an

idiot or an outright atheist would deny that truth! But let me go further: He not only is the *primary cause* of all other causes; but He is also *the primary cause of all subordinate causes as well*. By subordinate causes, I mean what others refer to as “secondary causes,” or as the Confessions “contingency of secondary causes.” Predestination is not the primary cause, nor is it the subordinate cause of anything. It is a word *descriptive* of these causes, and their effects, flowing interstitially, and continuously, from one minute point in time to the next, as these causes converge and merge together to form another effect; and each of these effects become causes of other effects, very minutely, smaller than the smallest particle of an atom, endlessly bringing to pass any and all determinate purposes of God’s unchanging mind. He thought it but once, and that one eternal thought continues eternally, unchanged, unhindered, unaided, and comprehending “all things” without a single exception, no matter how small or (even to man,) how trivial. Predestination describes this **immutable concept**.

Now, I will venture into the realm of one’s concern over “*metaphysics*” – it is embraced in these “all things” too! “*metaphysics*”: *The branch of philosophy that systematically investigates the nature of first principles and problems of ultimate reality, including the study of being and, often, the study of the structure of the universe.*” (The Second College Edition, *The American Heritage Dictionary*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.) I have no problem with one saying that the in-depth study of God’s word is metaphysical, so long as the man knows what he is saying. But if he means that when he quotes Scriptures on some deeper subject than another is familiar with, it is being Biblical; but if another does the same, it is being *metaphysical*, as if it were some “dirty” or “negative” term, then we ought to alert the reader, that we are not skimming the surface of some more shallow and commonly accepted aspect of Truth.

So I forewarn you, I’m not keeping to the Down-Grade view of Predestination that leaves out the totality of the concept; nor am I setting up a *term*, a *word*, a *name* as an object of divine worship. God is the author of all things, beings, including time, the air, the falling of an acorn, a squirrel to bury it, exactly where He would have it, germinating it Himself, developing it, and all the out-flowing effects of that minuscule and otherwise unnoticed event (to man); as

well of the microscopic creatures to devour and feed upon each and every leaf and decaying twig, wherever God’s divine providence blows it and directs it to those poor helpless, little, almost immovable creatures that are hungering for His bountiful food supply; and even their fixation of nitrogen from the raindrops, to feed the other plants co-habiting their little environment; and the larger beasts of the forest that feeds upon the plants as they develop and grow from the divinely supplied nourishment. And, I could go on with a good deal of causes and effects, to the greater Cosmos of the universe, all directed by the Eternal Godhead, Lord of heaven and earth, as He did eternally determined it in His one eternal, immutable thought. The point I make, is that it is not *predestination* that is the cause of all things, God is; and predestination *describes* it.

All things commenced in the eternal Godhead, for there was none other present to stimulate His mind, or to direct it by hints, and subtle suggestions. That mind is as eternal as God is. Each party in the Godhead is equally eternal. And the seed-substance of all His people is eternal – He hasn’t had a new thought (other than by anthropomorphic language – that is, to speak in the manner of man). If He thought of something new, He was not perfect in knowledge *before*; if He forgot anything, He is not *now* perfect in knowledge. And I doubt any reader will deny that He is perfect in all His attributes. (or, Is there one?) Yes, that is *metaphysical*. I don’t mind admitting it. It is better than being shallow, or worse. When one can grasp this **concept**, then they also should be able to grasp the absoluteness of predestination to bring all the members, each and every one, without fail, to their development in the exact time period and place that was in the eternal immutable mind of our God. “*He hath made of one blood* (the first Adam) *all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation* (Acts 17:26)”; and “*When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, to call me by His grace, I conferred not with flesh and blood, etc.*” is Paul’s personal experience explained by himself.

You asked if I agreed that predestination is “*permissive*” as Elder Hassell said. Absolutely not! Six billion humans on the face of this earth, almost none of them spiritually born of God (relatively speaking),

and each with a “permission” to do whatever their corrupt will, carnal mind, and evil imagination pleased to do. Insanity! That is the very BEST evidence of the apostasy of the Baptists’ peoples. Man does not have, never has had, and never will have a “*freedom of will*.” That is a product of the Erasmus’ humanism and “Age of Enlightenment,” which never was true to begin with!

When you observe the followers of Hassell’s theory, and why they hated the absoluteness of God’s eternal will, they invariably go back to the origin of sin. They are so blinded by their humanism that they will not tackle explaining the fall of Adam, or first entrance of sin into the universe, but rage against all who believe in a sovereign unlimited God. In EVERY single Peace Council report I’ve read, they, without fail, charge elders and churches of “making God the author of sin,” and say “they believe in the absolute predestination of all things, **including evil**.” But not once have I seen them *metaphysical* enough to cut back the shallow “permissiveness” or “suffering Adam to sin,” to answer the question themselves: “Did God willingly or unwillingly permit or suffer Adam to sin?” They dare not touch that with a “ten foot pole!” Further, I’ve found nothing in the King James Bible about a “permissive will” of God. Some people claim it is in there, but again, they will not give me the passage.

Metaphysically, a “permissive will in God” to allow a stupid creature to exercise his will freely is a concept beneath the sublime dignity of His person. It is an outright insult to His wisdom. Such would say, that God made man, and built him so, that God gave up His own right to do with him as He pleased! Mercy me! What audacity! Sin is NOT a created thing; it is the result of *the transgression of God’s law; and surely a child could understand* that all that the eternal God needed to have done, was not to place man under any law. In truth, He only gave him *two—what a mercy this!*—(1) not to eat of one lone little fruit tree over there in the middle of the garden, and (2) to replenish the earth. I read a couple years ago, that the United States Congress had passed fifty thousand laws in one administration. I thought, “No wonder the crime rate is so high!” Yet, when man had only one negative law, and one positive law, He still fell! I wonder why Infinite Wisdom did not foresee the terrible consequence of such a policy! (I jest!) Believing in eternal union between Christ the Head of His church, and His

members being in Him before He made man, I can easily understand, and rejoice in that Infinite Wisdom, whereby Christ was set up as “*a Lamb as it had been slain*,” (Rev. 5:6) and “*And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, (the Dragon) whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world* (Revelation 13:8).” That is an expression of eternal love!

I have but one answer as to why such a plain concept can’t be understood by the majority, and a highly intelligent class of them, while babes and sucklings can rejoice in it; without a philosophical degree, and even without an ability to read and write; - and that answer is: “*Even so Father, for it seemeth good in Thy sight*.”

—Elder Stanley C. Phillips

(From Hoyt Sparks’ Forum, 7 Feb 2009)

EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT

“*AND these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.*”— Matthew xxv. 46.

To those who fear the Lord it is a painful thing that in the churches of God there should arise perverse men speaking perverse things, bringing in damnable heresies. Although we are forewarned in the Scriptures that such characters shall creep in and plague the saints with their deceivings, yet it abides as a vexation, and bitter matter to the souls of those who are of the truth to have to know of the mischievous work of such ungodly men.

The sport delights in his sporting; sporting himself with his own deceiving. (2 Peter ii. 13.) The scorner delights in his scorning, and scoffers find satisfaction in their scoffings; for their ears are turned away from the truth and turned unto fables. (2 Tim. iv. 3.) Lies and fictions soothe their itching ears. “Reprobate concerning the faith.”—2 Tim. iii. 8. How dreadful!

The shadows of the evening time are stretched out, and the judgment of the great day approaches. The Lord will come; he shall descend from heaven with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. He shall come to execute judgment upon all, and to

convince all that are ungodly among them of their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him. (Jude 15.) The Lord shall come, and those who hated him and despised him, who knew not God and Jesus Christ, shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power. But he will be the delight, the welcomed One, the everlasting admiration of all the loved ones, who love him, who have believed in Christ in that day. (2 Thess. i. 9, 10.)

The hypocrite with dissembled love and feigned faith, with lip service professedly worships God, with flatteries and much wantonness allures and wins disciples to fellowship them. But even though some of the dear children of God may for a time be deceived by carnal professors of Christ's name, our Lord is not mocked; all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Our gracious God discerneth all the pretensions of the ungodly, and he knows them that trust him. The true worshippers worship him in spirit and in truth. The Father seeketh such to worship him.

Truly it is all of the sovereign grace of God that a sinner receives the love of the truth unto salvation. This is the fruit of the teachings of the Holy Spirit in the soul. He gives us a heart to know the truth. He sends forth in the soul of the quickened sinner light and truth, and brings us into agreement, into acquiescence with the doctrine of God our Savior; we bow to it, love it and delight in it. A minister of Satan once said to me, it did not matter what ye believed, we were all aiming for the same place, etc. I told him it was a matter of much importance with me what I believed, and that I would sooner believe the truth than believe a lie. They that are Christ's are sanctified by the truth. (John xvii. 17-19.) It is in God's riches in mercy unto us that we are manifestly of the truth, that we love the truth, walk in the truth, that the truth dwells in us, and shall be with us forever. (2 John i. 2.) Blessed indeed are all such. "Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in." Isaiah xxvi. 2. Men destitute of the truth (1 Tim. vi. 5) have no harmonious views of divine revelation, yet they are wiser in their own conceits than seven men that can render a reason, and their utterances are nothing but a maze of confusion, a wresting of the Scriptures, handling it deceitfully, and corrupting the word

of God, in all of which it is manifested that they are unlearned (2 Peter iii. 16), untaught of God, destitute concerning the truth. None of the comfort, that appearance of pleasure which spurious professors of Christ's name find in their errors, is of the Holy Ghost; for He, saith our Savior, shall guide you into all truth. (John xvi. 13.)

Satan's devices are many and entangle many, and one of his masterpieces of deception is to get them to believe that he himself, the devil, has no personal being, and that at death mankind are annihilated. This nonentity is a devilish dream in the souls of men who are captives of the delusions of Satan. Sometimes quickened sinners, under the guilt and bondage of their sins, feeling the just and holy wrath of God in His law against them, have meditated terror in their hearts (Isaiah xxxiii. 18), yes, dreadful apprehensions of the wrath to come (1 Thess. i. 10), have overwhelmed them, and in their souls' miseries have envied the beasts of the field, and have wished they were such for they are not sinners, there is no everlasting punishment for them; they die, and that is the end of their being. But this no hell doctrine—no hereafter, no future torment, no punishment for those who die in their sins—is contrary to the experience of every sinner who is convinced of his sins and of the wrath to come by the Holy Ghost. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."—Psalms ix. 17. The Son of God thus speaks, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."—Matt. x. 28; Luke xii. 4, 5. If in their guilt and desperation wretched sinners have wished there were no God and no hereafter, and thus all would end in annihilation, it avails us nothing. But the poor, wretched, law-condemned, self-condemned, afflicted sinner fears to die lest he should be found, justly so, as the rich man who died, and was buried, and in hell lifted up his eyes, being in torment. (Luke x. 22, 23.) "And the smoke of their torment ascended up forever and ever."—Rev. xiv. 11. The called of God, the convicted sinner under his soul's heavy load of sin, under the curse of the law, knows that he must be pardoned or damned, and it becomes a matter all-important how he shall escape the damnation of hell. (Matt. xxiii. 33.) How can the Lord pardon, justify and save a sinner like me? "God be merciful to me a sinner."—Luke xviii. 13.

Men who teach the nonentity of the personal being of the devil tell us that the devil is man's corrupt nature. But the devil came to Jesus in the wilderness tempting him. (Matt. iv. 1.) This was not His corrupt nature, for Christ Jesus was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens. (Heb. vii. 26.) "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."—John xiv. 30. We read that Satan entered into Judas Iscariot. (John xiii. 27.) Christ declared the personality of the devil, and he is under law a transgressor, saying, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."—John viii. 44. "The devil sinneth from the beginning."—1 John iii. 8.

And as to the denial of the everlasting punishment of the wicked who die in their sins (Matt. xxv. 46), not only does such denial contradict the explicit teachings of the Holy Scriptures, but it shows how such erroneous men have utterly failed to understand the sufferings of our precious Christ for the sins of his people to bring them to God. What! Was Christ bruised, wounded, put to grief, and his soul made an offering for sin, and shall all the sins of his enemies, of the nonelect for whom Christ did not give himself a sacrifice then be winked at by the Lord and go unpunished? Oh! no creature could suffer as Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God. Oh what a cup he drank! What agony for the church, the elect's sake was his in Gethsemane and on the cross of Calvary!

And sighed, and groaned, and prayed, and feared;
Bore all incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, and none to spare."

But we, if we are of God, wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come. (1 Thess. i. 10.) But the Sadducees, the annihilationists, deny that there is any wrath to come after death, and scoff at the doctrine that any beings are tormented for their sins forever and ever, even though the Scriptures say so. (Rev. xiv. 10, 11.)

Annihilation! This is a fleshly pleasing morsel. So much so that many millions of the human race

have in Buddhism made the ultimate height of desire to be what they designate Nirvana, signifying the cessation of all conscious beings, personal extinction, ceasing to be; annihilation is its equivalent. Thus they wish to be, and they make and love this lie. (Rev. xxii. 15.)

Annihilation! But there is no fear of God before the eyes of those who reject the solemn words of Jesus Christ who thus speaks in Matthew xxv. 41, 45, "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." (Rev. xx. 10-15.) Though the ungodly lull their guilty fears, dope themselves, and sear their defiled consciences with the seductive delusions of annihilation at the moment of death, so that they need have no thoughts about a future condition, nevertheless how dreadful it is to go into perdition with a lie in their right hand. How shall such wicked people who hold and teach such wicked conscience-searing doctrines escape the damnation of hell? Annihilation! In the instant of its infliction upon any being, it would cease to be punishment. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."—Rev. xxi. 8. But men of corrupt minds, destitute concerning the truth, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God, are ever teaching pernicious errors; they live and thrive and sport themselves with their own deceivings; though they are ever learning they are never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Those who fear the word, and have that anointing which they have received of the Lord, which abideth in them, and which teacheth them of all things, and is the truth, and is no lie, can find no place in their hearts to wish such characters God-speed. For "whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." — 2 John 2. Poor sinner, muse on this:

"Love moved him to die, on this I rely,
My Savior hath loved me, I cannot tell why;
But this I can tell, he loved me so well,
As to lay down his life to redeem me from hell."

—Frederick W. Keene,
Raleigh, North Carolina.

(Editor's note: We are indebted to Brother Hoyt Sparks for making this old writing of Elder Keene available. Date unknown.)

WHAT IS AN “INDEPENDENT CHURCH”?

Some brethren have a grave misconception, as unbelievable as that may sound, about what an “independent church” is. The truth is, whether or not a church is a member of an association, ALL Primitive Baptist churches are independent.

This may come as a shock and a surprise to some, but each and every Primitive Baptist church **without exception** is **autonomous** or completely self-governing. That does not mean they may not seek advice and counsel from sister churches, but in the last analysis an independent church is a sovereign body unto itself, ultimately answerable only to the Lord and to no earthly individual or group.

No pastor, elder, deacon, committee, group of elders or deacons, no association or moderator of an association can dictate to any Primitive Baptist church what they can or cannot do, what they can or cannot do, believe or practice, who they may or may not use in their stand or call as pastor, or with whom they may or may not preach. Although men or groups may try to do so, no one can *rightfully* tell any local Primitive Baptist church whom they may or may not embrace as members or with whom they may associate, affiliate, or who they may have preach in their stand. In church matters, **under God**, the simple majority or unanimous vote of a lowly and humble Baptist church, without any outside interference, is the highest court on earth.

I said no one can *rightfully* tell any church what they can or cannot do. The key word here is *rightfully*. Sometimes men will prey on the fears, passiveness, or ignorance of scriptural principles of the more timid brethren, leaving the strong impression that if a church does not drop a certain member, or if their pastor does not stop preaching certain doctrines, or if they do not begin to practice one action or refrain from

practicing another, or if they do not cease to affiliate with a certain man, elder, church, or group, they will be dropped from their association, fellowship, or affiliation. Not only is this implied, not only is the strong impression left, but aggressive, powerful men often have the power to actually exclude brethren from their affiliation. Even the apostle Paul faced this problem among the churches in Galatia: “*Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them* (Galatians 4.16f).” The wording of this text may be a little hard to wade through, but what Paul was saying was this: In context, the Judaizers were calling Paul an **enemy** because he opposed circumcizing the Gentile converts. “*They, who call me an enemy, show zeal with no good in mind; they would shut you out [exclude you] from others [i.e., me, Paul is saying, me, Paul in particular] that your zeal may be for them alone.*” To exclude the Galatian Gentile Christians from Paul would be the same as excluding Paul from them.

I have said all that to say this: No one other than God Himself has any authority to dictate to a church or a preacher/pastor what they can or cannot do. Our God does this by the Scriptures *as the Holy Spirit leads godly men to understand them*. Problems arise when men are not given to understand the Scriptures as they are meant to be understood. Without going too far afield, two reasons (and there are more) this may come about, humanly speaking, are by:

1. **Simple ignorance of word meanings.** We knew a man who, on the basis of seven words in Hebrews 7.26 (“For such an high priest [the Lord Jesus Christ] became us....”) believed that whenever a preacher went into the stand to preach, it was no longer Elder So-and-so, but it was really, literally, Jesus Christ, who had transfigured Himself into the preacher, in the stand doing the preaching! His reasoning was based on the dictionary definition of **become**: *to come to be; to grow to be, to change or develop into, as a tadpole becomes a frog or a caterpillar becomes a butterfly*. Such was his regular approach to “understanding the Bible.” Had he read the rest of the definition of **become** (*to befit or to suit; to be right for or suitable to*), or checked Strong’s definition (“*to be suitable or proper*”), and noted that the word is also rendered as “comely” in the KJV, he would not have come to such a weird “interpretation.”

2. Willful ignorance and perversion of the Scriptures to promote their own self-interests, whatever those interests may be. "...they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own **destruction** (2 Peter 3.16)." "...some having put away concerning faith have made **shipwreck**: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to **blaspheme** (1 Timothy 1.19f)." "But shun profane and vain **babblings**: for they will increase unto more **ungodliness**. And their word will eat as doth a **canker**: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who **concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some** (2 Timothy 2.16-18)." "For Demas hath **forsaken** me, having **loved this present world**...(2 Timothy 4.10)." "Alexander the coppersmith did me **much evil**: the Lord reward him according to his works: of whom be thou ware also; for **he hath greatly withstood our words** (2 Timothy 4.14f)."

"But He [Jesus] answered and said unto them, Why do ye also **transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?...ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition**. Ye **hypocrites**, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, **teaching for doctrines the commandments of men** (Matthew 15.3-9)."

"I wrote unto the church: but **Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not**. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, **prating against us with malicious words**: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God. Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true. I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee: But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name (3 John verses 9-14)."

Blasphemy, vain babblings, ungodliness, preferring doctrinal error over the truth, love of the world, given to much evil, withstanding the apostles' words, teaching for doctrine the traditions and commandments of men, loving to have the preeminence in the church, prating against the apostles (and their doctrine and practice) with malicious words...those like Hymenaeus, Alexander, Philetus, and Demas would no doubt say that they had the correct interpretation of the Scriptures. They would have said it was Paul and John who were wrong, teaching "man-made traditions," and insisting on having the preeminence. The enemies of Christ even said He was a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners, and at least three times they said He had a devil.

In face of such powerful and irreconcilable disagreements, then, how does one know who has truth on his side and who is in error? John answered that question thusly: "Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God." Paul, **who advocated certain apostolic traditions** (2 Thessalonians 2.15 and 3.6) **but not the tradition of men** (Colossians 2.8), answered, "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine (1 Timothy 4.13)." "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Timothy 3.16f)." Christ said, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me (John 5.39)." Isaiah said, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them (Isaiah 8.20)."

On the other hand...

Churches, preachers, and pastors may well seek help, advice, or outside counsel from their brethren in sister churches: "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety (Proverbs 11.14)." But the final decision belongs with that church or that preacher alone.

After God had sent Peter to the house of the Roman centurion Cornelius, a Gentile, Peter had baptized several of the Gentile converts of the household of Cornelius. He stayed several more days to preach, teach, and answer questions.

When he returned to Jerusalem, the brethren of the church challenged him, confronting him for eating at an integrated (Jew and Gentile) lunch-counter: “*And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them* (Acts 11.2f).”

Peter did not first ask the church if he could go preach to those to whom God had already sent him. Peter did not ask the church if it was okay if he baptized any Gentiles who might believe. By the grace of God, in His providence, Peter took Jewish/Christian witnesses from the church of Jerusalem along with him (Acts 10.23, 45, 46, 47. In verse 47 **Peter even put the baptism of Cornelius and his household to a church vote.** See also Acts 11.12f).

Another fact that must not be overlooked is that no church, including the church at Jerusalem, was under any obligation to automatically receive the baptized believing Gentiles as members just because Peter had baptized them. Likewise, Philip did not ask any church’s permission to baptize the Ethiopian eunuch; on the other hand, no church was obligated to receive either Philip’s baptism or the eunuch as a member. This, too, is part of a local church’s autonomy or independence.

In point of fact, Peter’s baptizing the household of Cornelius and Philip’s baptizing the Ethiopian were no doubt acknowledged by the churches. The Scriptures record the fact that, after Peter explained exactly what had happened, what he had done, and how, and why, “*When they [of the Jerusalem church] heard these things, they held their peace [they could announce their church was in peace and they did so], and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life* (Acts 11.18).”

Nicolaitanes

Certainly these historic Baptist principles (*i.e.*, the sovereign independence, under God, of the local church, and the elder’s responsibility directly to his God, both without any outside interference) have been overlooked and ignored to the point they are almost unknown in many twenty-first century Baptist churches.

Men sometimes do try to control local churches of which they are not a member. Sometimes they succeed, as do some men who control the church of

their home membership in what amounts to a one-man rule or dictatorship. This is exactly what is meant by the *deeds* and the *doctrine* of the **Nicolaitanes** (Revelation 2.6 and 2.15).

The name **Nicolaitanes** comes from two Greek words: *nikos*, meaning a *conquest or victory* [wearing *Nike*® athletic shoes, named after the Greek goddess of victory, implies you will win]; and *laos*, meaning *people* or a *people*. From *laos* we also get the word **laity**, with which some denominations contrast their “common” members to their more special, more important, higher-ranking “clergy.”

Nicolaitanes, then, means someone who teaches or practices conquering the common members of the church or ruling over the “laity” or “lay” members.

You will note that what started as the *deeds* of the Nicolaitanes in the church at Ephesus (Revelation 2.6) had degenerated to the *doctrine* of the Nicolaitanes in the church at Pergamos (verse 15). What was once “deeds” had become a practice; what was practice became a man-made tradition; what was a tradition over a period of time became an *accepted* tradition; and what was an accepted tradition had become a doctrine. Does this progressive degeneration sound familiar? When the mismanagement of a church reaches the stage where the *deeds* of the Nicolaitanes have become *accepted doctrine and practice*, then that church has entered the sad state of affairs whenever and wherever questioning or opposing the deeds of men is regarded as heresy and disorder.

While saying this, I am well aware that this is a two-way street, a two-edged sword. When faithful brethren exercise church order and discipline, hold fast to the old paths, and withdraw from disorderly members or churches, the ones so excluded often rage and howl that the brethren doing the excluding are the ones who are following man-made traditions. (Who said being in the church was easy?)

Both times in Revelation 2 where Christ mentions Nicolaitanes, whether it is their *deeds* or their *doctrine*, He says He hates both. To the Ephesians He says: “But this thou hast, that thou hatest **the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate**. To the church at Pergamos He says, “So hast thou also them that hold **the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate**.” Such an evil presence in a church is fearful to think about, the more so because the Lord Jesus Christ hates both the deeds and the doctrine of a man’s

conquering and lording it over “the common people” who heard Jesus gladly (Mark 12.37). As we all know, however, even Primitive Baptists have not been exempt from this plague of men trying to be lords over God’s heritage. If there were neither possibility or danger of this happening, what need would there have been for Peter to write these words? “Neither as being **lords over God's heritage**, but being ensamples to the flock (1 Peter 5.3).” Peter’s admonition would have been unnecessary if there were neither possibility nor tendency of brethren to lord it over God’s heritage.

Laodiceans

In the broad picture, **the rule of the people** is no better than the reign of a ruling class of elders. The name of the **Laodicean** church (Revelation 3.14) means “the people’s judgment,” “the people’s right,” or “the ruling [rulership] of the people.” “Laodicea” comes from the same Greek word from which we get the word *laity* or people, as above, plus a word meaning judgment or justice (or “rights,” or “right,” as above).

One might say, what is wrong with that? Isn’t that a simple democracy? Not necessarily. Would you want the “justice” of a “democratic, majority rules” vigilante mob? That is the rule of the people, the rule of a mob. That is what the Laodicean church had degenerated into, throwing off all restraints, going for what the people want. Read Exodus 32 to see the Laodicean principle carried to fruition, and read 1 Corinthians 10.7 to see Paul’s divinely inspired commentary on Exodus 32: “*Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people [Paul here uses the word “laos”] sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.*” By the way, the “laity people” were not playing basketball or dominoes when they “rose up to play.”

So, a church ignoring the precepts of the Lord Jesus Christ and doing whatever they please on the one hand is as bad as a domineering priesthood, preacher, moderator, elder, or deacon running roughshod over a congregation is on the other. To complete the picture, we know of at least one church where a *non-member* has the pastor (and through the pastor the man has the congregation) virtually under his control. There is perhaps no depth to which people and churches, even Primitive Baptist churches, will

sink if they are not restrained and kept by the power of God unto salvation in this apostate and Laodicean age.

The Divine Despot

Nowadays we reserve the title of “despot” for the likes of Hitler, Stalin, or other political tyrants. We rarely think of the term “despot” as applying to our God. That is our loss.

Christ’s churches are neither lawless nor free-thinking rebels. Properly, they are submissive to the Lordship of Christ Jesus. That is why His full title, **the Lord Jesus Christ**, is used eighty-four times in the New Testament, all of which emphasizes His LORDSHIP. A *lord* is an absolute master, the owner of slaves, the undisputed head over his household. Sarah is commended for recognizing Abraham in that capacity. Sarah used the same word referring to her husband that is used for God as Lord: **Adon** or **Adonai**. Peter says (alluding to Genesis 18.12): “For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him **lord**: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement (1 Peter 3.5f).” Even as Sarah was submissive to Abraham as her **lord**, so the church is to be submissive to Jesus Christ as **the Lord** over all.

Paul did not preach “All you have to do is believe in Jesus.” He told the jailer, “Believe on **the Lord Jesus Christ**, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house (Acts 16.31).” Believe on the **Lord Jesus Christ** and *all that this means and implies*. “Now I beseech you, brethren, **mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them**. For they that are such serve not our **Lord Jesus Christ**, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple (Romans 16.17f).”

It was the **Lordship** of Christ that Paul invoked in telling the Corinthian church to exclude the unruly male member who was living in fornication with “his father’s wife” (probably this fornicator’s step-mother). “In the name of our **Lord Jesus Christ**, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our **Lord Jesus Christ**, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the **Lord Jesus** (1 Corin-

thians 5.4f).” Paul ended this book (1 Corinthians) with these words: “If any man love not the **Lord** Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.” *Anathema* means accursed or excommunicated; *Maranatha* is “an exclamation of approaching divine judgment” (see Strong’s dictionary on these two words). If any man love not the **Lord** Jesus Christ, let him be excommunicated; our **Lord** is coming in judgment.

Jesus Christ, then, is **the Lord, the absolute boss, the dictator** over His church. Multitudes have lost sight of this fact. No less than nine times, the New Testament uses the word “despotes,” from which we get our word “despot.” Five of those nine times it is rendered into English by the word *master*, meaning the head of a household or the owner-master of slaves or servants; the other four times it is rendered **Lord** and applied to God the Father or God the Son (Luke 2.29, Acts 4.24, 2 Peter 2.1, and Revelation 6.10).

This discussion of the **Lordship** of Christ Jesus is set forth here because He is “...the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all (Ephesians 1.22f).” With that relationship firmly established as part of the doctrine of Christ, no person, group, or organization may reasonably insert himself or themselves between a local church and her **Lord**.

All churches, then, are on an equal footing in this regard, as autonomous sovereign bodies under God; that is, they are answerable to God alone for their actions. Whether or not they are in an association has nothing to do with their right to self-governance.

Mistakes have been made by brethren and churches assuming that associations are governing or controlling bodies with the power to dictate beliefs and behavioral standards to the churches that comprise the association. Some men, glad enough to take advantage of their more passive brethren, will assume command of a church or an association if the brethren will tolerate such insolence.

Why, then, are there associations? What is the purpose of close-knit affiliations? We might look back at two of the main reasons brethren of an earlier era were moved to unite in associations in the first place.

(1) For fellowship and hearing preachers from other parts of the country. Two or three centuries ago and before, to visit brethren hundreds of miles away was not easy. We can now travel a thousand miles easier than brethren could travel a hundred in bygone

days. If a minister (or anyone else) could afford to travel to faraway meetings, they might well do so at a general meeting time or an association time, when they might see and hear the most brethren.

(2) Associational minutes provide a way to communicate important information to far-off brethren about matters of dealings according to gospel order.

In earlier times in the United States of America, before there were such rapid means of communication as telephones and the like, it might take weeks to get a letter from the east coast to the western frontier by Pony Express, Wells Fargo®, carrier pigeons, wagon trains, or smoke signals.

Say Elder Ne’er-Do-Well (Elder N. for short) is the pastor and a member of Goode Primitive Baptist Church on the east coast. He is known throughout our country as a godly preacher and a good pastor. Now suppose Elder N. is excluded from Goode Church for heresy and gross misconduct.

Elder N. says, “Boys, you can have your old church. I’m going to California and make a good living panning for gold!”

On his way west, however, he decides to play on his good reputation. Along his way he drops in on every church of his old affiliation he can find (that has not yet heard of his folly) and, by the gifts and kindnesses of the unsuspecting brethren along the way, thereby finances his way to the California gold rush.

The problem: How does Goode Primitive Baptist Church get the word out to all the brethren to beware of Elder N.? Without the vehicle of a nationwide loose-knit association of brethren of like faith and order, Goode P.B.C. would have to do as well as they could, by word of mouth or by sending letters to everyone they know.

Being a member of an association, however, would help solve that problem IF the association and its clerk did *what they were supposed to do in their corresponding letter*, the minutes of their business session, or elsewhere in their annual published minutes. Somewhere within their latest and current minutes should be noted that Goode Primitive Baptist Church, member of the Faithful Primitive Baptist Association, has withdrawn affiliation from Elder Ne’er-Do-Well, the charges against him being heresy and gross misconduct. Their published minutes provide a written history of their association and churches, but this history is only as good as it is complete and accurate.

Then, when the minutes are distributed far and wide to all the various associations and churches in affiliation, fellowship, and correspondence with Goode Primitive Baptist Church and the Faithful Primitive Baptist Association, everyone who needs to know would be far more likely to know they should beware of Elder N. than if it was left up to every individual church in the USA to notify every other individual church in the USA of every disciplinary exclusion.

Associations, then, provide a link between brethren who are of like mind in doctrine and practice and who are only separated by distance but not separated by differences of understanding the Scriptures.

An Example of Church Autonomy: The Lord's Supper or Communion; Four Main Positions

There may be more, but there seems to be four main positions as to who may or may not participate when a church observes the Lord's supper or communion in or with a local church:

1. **The members of the local church alone.** No matter who else might be present, even if the twelve apostles themselves were present at the meeting, no one other than the actual members of that local church would be allowed to participate. This is an enforcing of the belief that communion is a "church ordinance" in the strictest and most literal sense of the words.

First of all, when a church observes communion or the Lord's supper: If it is that church's belief, custom, and practice (a) to limit those who participate to their own membership and (b) not to seat visiting brethren in their communion, it is their privilege and right to do so. From an "outsider's" viewpoint, why would you or I want to participate in a meeting where we are not wanted? I for one would not knowingly force my presence upon anyone where I knew I was not wanted, nor would I even remotely wish to do so.

2. **Only those who are of like faith and order.** Those who are recognized as being of the same affiliation may commune with such a church, no matter where the visitors live or where their church membership is. If the visiting brethren are in correspondence or affiliation *and in good standing with their home church*, they may participate. (By the way, look up the word "excommunicate." It means to deprive of or deny **communion** for the excluded one—see any good dictionary). This is perhaps the most widely held view among the churches with whom Saints Rest

Church in Dallas is in affiliation. Our seeing it this way does not make it right, nor does it make it wrong; it is the recognized practice among our churches only because churches like our correspondence and affiliation believe that this is the New Testament rule and standard. That is part of the invisible bond to which we refer when we say that such and such a church is of *our faith and order*, or we are *in correspondence*. Note that there are brethren of our affiliation who hold to either of these first two positions, and holding to the one position or the other is not made "a test of fellowship." Positions 3 and 4, below, are another matter. We will not *knowingly* affiliate with anyone who practices open communion. That does not mean we think we are better than they; but we are **different to the extent that we will not knowingly affiliate with any open-communion advocates.**

3. **Open communion;** that is, some churches say that anyone who professes to be a Christian may commune with them, regardless of what denomination or affiliation they might be. Such people and churches may express it this way: "You may participate if your conscience does not condemn you in it. We leave it up to you and your God to decide whether or not you will participate in our communion." These brethren would not prohibit a Roman Catholic, a Methodist, or member of any other denomination from communing, if that person wanted to participate and is "satisfied" with his own baptism and church membership.

Although there may be some who *call* themselves "Primitive Baptist" churches and who practice open communion, I do not personally know of any orderly Primitive church of any order or faction who practices open communion.

Many years ago, we heard about one elder who, in serving at the Lord's table, knowingly allowed a Roman Catholic woman to commune with the church that day. If my memory serves me correctly, in the church's resolving this issue, that elder was excluded both from church membership and from fellowship or affiliation, as he *should* have been.

4. **Anyone can observe the Lord's supper at any time or place.** Those of this persuasion do not look upon the Lord's supper as being a church ordinance. Rather, they would cite a Scripture like "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and **truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son**

Jesus Christ (1 John 1.3).” Their understanding is that “we do not commune with each other so much as we commune directly with God. Communion is an act of personal worship.” A TV preacher recently commended people who, while having their “daily devotional” each morning, also “have coffee and donuts with the Lord” at the breakfast table and call it “communion.”

Among the people who believe as these men do (that your communion is primarily with Christ and His heavenly Father and not with the brethren), are people who are also liberal with the idea of what constitutes the proper elements of the communion table. Such men have easily departed from using “the fruit of the vine” and unleavened bread. They are quite comfortable in substituting donuts and coffee (as above mentioned), cookies and milk, or a Twinkie® and a Coca-Cola® for the bread and the wine.

I must restrain myself from further comment on the likes of such men, for I fear I would be unable to maintain the minimum level of charity I would aspire to, even when I am speaking of such enemies of the cross of Christ, and of His doctrine and practice.

LIMITS

Okay, someone says, if every church is seemingly a rule unto themselves, where does anyone know to draw the line in doctrine, order, practice, observation of the church ordinances, and discipline?

This has in part already been briefly addressed—the Scriptures provide the only acceptable guidelines for an Old Baptist, and that should be the rule for anyone professing to be a Christian. The trouble is, *everyone*, Episcopalians, Methodists, Lutherans, Seventh Day Baptists, or whatever—they all say that the Bible is their only standard. Now what?

Speaking only with the Old School Primitive Baptists in mind, their articles of faith, church covenants, and rules of decorum indicate this principle when a church or an elder departs from scriptural practice: After reasonable attempts have been made to labor with the erring party along the lines of Matthew 18.15-17, and no reconciliation has been reached, **then** if an offense is deemed serious enough to warrant it, offended brethren may withdraw affiliation from the offending person(s), elder(s), or church(es). That is all they can do. The offended brethren cannot remove a man’s ordination, but they can refuse to

recognize or acknowledge it. They cannot declare that another church is no longer a church (only Christ can remove their candlestick—Revelation 2.5), but brethren can deny them affiliation, fellowship, correspondence, or recognition.

It comes down to something like this: Any church, as a sovereign body under Christ, can practice whatever they understand is right and necessary; **BUT** other churches do not have to go along with outlandish practices. Other churches can *and should* withdraw from the offending church any time they see fit, whenever the offenders depart from the doctrine or practice dictated in the Scriptures.

What about preachers and their preaching? Any elder or any person may preach whatever he is given to preach, and he may preach **to** any congregation he is given to preach to in the grace and providence of God; **BUT**, when he pushes beyond a point where his brethren believe he has violated the doctrine and practice of our God, **his home church and/or other churches may withdraw from him.**

That briefly explains why the Absolute Predestinarian Primitive or Old School Baptists **will not** affiliate with Missionary Baptists, Conditionalist (“Old Line”) Primitives, or indeed, anyone else other than their own kind, *often refusing fellowship to other factions among the Absoluters themselves.*

This is generally true among all Baptists, of whatever kind, far and wide. Most if any exceptions will only be found among the more liberal “anything goes if it brings in a crowd” Arminian Baptist denominations.

To be truly independent requires a God-given sense of personal integrity and responsibility. Independence does not imply one can do whatever he wishes and still be of the generally accepted “same faith and order” of his affiliation. If one does not like the doctrine and practice of his own affiliation, then he can either (a) find one that suits him better (there are thousands of ready-made denominations out there), or (b) start one of his own (thousands have done so). He should not try to get his brethren’s church(es) to change to a “new and improved” way of doing things.

More could be said about the subject of independent churches. Some of what needs to be said will be found in the companion article, “Fellowship,” on the following pages.

—C. C. Morris

FELLOWSHIP

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts 2.42).

On the church level, *fellowship* among Primitive Baptists is also called *affiliation* or *correspondence*. **Correspondence** does not merely mean that they write letters, notes, and e-mail “correspondence” to each other. Nor does correspondence mean merely the exchange of church letters or associational minutes. It includes such things but means much more. It means one church or association corresponds part for part to another, much like two human bodies correspond to one another—hand for hand, head for head, eye for eye, ear for ear, and the like. Two individuals, associations, or churches correspond with one another when they mutually agree that they consistently match each other in both doctrine and practice; they hold *most* views in common, especially those **core doctrinal points they believe cannot be violated**. Churches and associations in correspondence are generally compatible and comfortable with each other in principle.

Rightly or wrongly, and right or wrong, many Primitive Baptists think of themselves as being the most exclusive of all church groups. They are probably the least likely of all people to participate in a union meeting with men or churches other than those of their own “like faith and order.” That is exactly because of the differences between the doctrinal beliefs and practices of Primitive Baptists and those of all other denominations.

What is “like faith and order”?

In the sacred Scriptures, the word **faith** is used in more than one way. (1) One way is the inner personal faith one has in someone or something. Thus one may, at different levels, have faith in God, faith in their spouse, faith that their ladder or their chair will hold their weight, or faith in their faithful old car to get them to the store and back. This is **subjective or inner faith** of the heart, mind, soul, or spirit, or faith that is experimental. (In a church context, *experimental* has to do with our *experience*; it has nothing to do

with *experiments* like when a chemist mixes two substances to find out what will happen.)

(2) The other kind of faith is **objective**, or **faith in an object, something outside of oneself as an object**. In a biblical sense, **the organized body of doctrine** is collectively called “*the faith*” with the definite article “the.” This is what Jude referred to as “the faith” when he wrote, “*Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3).*” That is, Jude wrote that the beloved should earnestly contend for *the complete doctrine* of Christ and what God gave to the writers of the Scriptures to say about it. This body or collection of doctrinal truth is thrice referred to as “**the doctrine of Christ**” (Hebrews 6.1, and twice in 2 John 1.9) and once as “**the doctrine of God**” (Titus 2.10).

It was this body of doctrine (which is, for all practical purposes, **the gospel** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ) to which Christ referred when He asked, “Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find **the faith** [Greek, **την πιστιν**] on the earth (Luke 18.8)?” The original text has the definite article **the** (Greek, **την**), which was for some reason wrongly left out of the King James (KJV) translation. Christ’s rhetorical question asks: When the Son of man cometh, shall He find His doctrine still being taught on the earth? In this context, His doctrine, or “the faith,” would include His teachings as to order or practice.

Like faith is not necessarily saying that those of like faith agree on every detail of doctrine and understanding of the Scriptures. There are probably no two men alive who completely agree on everything.

Like faith means they agree in principle and understanding as to what the Bible means doctrinally. Brethren can and do exercise a wide range of tolerance in this regard. One man says the lake of fire is literal, conscious, eternal torment of the wicked, while another believes in the annihilation of the wicked and says the lake of fire is only figurative of everlasting destruction. How, then, can affiliated brethren all walk together and still be in such wide disagreement? They can do so for any number of reasons:

(1) Historically their ties may go back to a time when they were being persecuted and killed by a common enemy. In the early days of the United States of

America, Baptists (and others) were persecuted, imprisoned, and killed by both Puritans and the Church of England. In such times, whatever common beliefs there were among different factions of Baptists, coupled with their need for safety, drove many to cooperate for their mutual protection. In more peaceful times they might have bitterly argued their doctrinal differences, but in times of persecution they would shelter one another. For other examples, and there are many: Baptists, Jews, Roman Catholics, and charismatics could argue endlessly over doctrine and practice; but in Communist Russia, or under the Nazi regime during World War II, and in present-day Red China, they protected each other from certain death at the hands of the ruling government, and to this day they still do, wherever atheistic governments are killing dissenters. Likewise, in countries under present-day Muslim rule, many non-Muslims are being martyred at this present time; but Buddhists, Christians, and Hindus often provide shelter for one another to save each other from certain death at the hand of their common enemy, Islam.

Such historic ties, then, (we here speak primarily of Baptist sects) are often maintained for many years, decades, or centuries after persecution has ceased.

(2) The brethren generally are humble, tolerant, and respectful of their brethren's right to believe the Scriptures as they understand them;

(3) They are humble enough to concede that they do not know everything and that they might be wrong in their understanding about some doctrinal points;

(4) They have a mutual understanding, usually unwritten, that they will not push their disagreements to the point of breaking their fellowship; and,

(5) Regardless of the differences of understanding and opinion, they are convinced that they agree enough in principle that they should not separate one from the other.

For another example, consider the doctrine of the resurrection. Within the same affiliation, sometimes within the same church, will be found those who believe in a literal, physical, resurrection of the body and others who believe the resurrection is only spiritual in nature and that the fleshly body will never rise from its earthly tomb. For many reasons, brethren are willing to bear with those of a different persuasion such as this if they yet believe they are all otherwise deeply **united in principle**.

Like order means two parties agree in principle and understanding as to what the Bible teaches about a church's discipline and practice. For one example in this category, there are Primitive Baptists who will fellowship or affiliate with those churches who have as members among them who are also members of secret societies or oath-bound orders such as the Masonic Order, the Fraternal Order of Eagles, or the Odd Fellows. There are others who will not (knowingly) receive into their membership any member of the Masonic Lodge or any other secret order, and they will not affiliate with any church that does. Within the last century there have been Primitive Baptist churches who have even excluded any member who had an insurance policy or burial policy through the Odd Fellows lodge. Some brethren have taken this even farther: They would not fellowship anyone who had *any* insurance policy, viewing insurance policies as a lack of faith in the providence of God.

Order also addresses such subjects as how the local church views and handles disciplinary action, cases of worldly living, drunkenness, fornication and adultery, divorce and remarriage, church attendance (or lack thereof), and dishonorable conduct of her members. During the development of the western and southwestern United States of America, when Providence Primitive Baptist Church of Mount Vernon, Texas, was more of a frontier church, they regularly received members who were only passing through east Texas and who stayed for a season or two or a year or two before pressing further west. During that time, exercising disciplinary action upon unruly members, Providence often excluded members for public intoxication, brawling, non-attendance of church, worldly or immodest attire, and other violations of expected Christian conduct.

Problems develop when men push conflicts between men, churches, or associations of churches beyond a hard-to-define level of tolerance. There may be a wide range of ideas that brethren are willing to tolerate among themselves for what might be considered the common good. When brethren are pushed beyond what they consider acceptable differences, they may feel compelled to draw the line against novel doctrines or practices they are no longer willing to tolerate or to affiliate.

To repeat: In a free society, no one can tell a preacher, elder, or pastor where he can or cannot

preach, or with whom he must or must not preach. No one can tell a church what they can or cannot do, or with whom they may or may not affiliate. It may be a surprise to some, but no one can tell a Primitive Baptist church they cannot have a Sunday school or a piano, a pipe organ, or a jug band if they so desire.

What their brethren can do and will do in such cases is withdraw fellowship, affiliation, or correspondence from the church that has departed from the expected practice.

Fellowship Is Based On Doctrine

I have said elsewhere that when I was a young man I attended a Missionary Baptist Bible college in Missouri. While I was there, the student body was divided by constant arguments about “Calvinism” and “Arminianism.” This strife over “free will *versus* free grace” even penetrated the faculty. By God’s grace and in His providence, it was in this atmosphere of controversy that I was first exposed to the doctrines of grace, for which I hope to be thankful for ever. In God’s kind providence, this constant discussion of the pros and cons of doctrinal disputes put me on the road (humanly speaking) toward the Absolute Predestinarian Primitive Baptists.

At that time and in that college there was a kind, gentle, loving teacher-professor whose tender heart was deeply grieved by the constant arguing within the student body. One day, he gave his class (of which I was a member) an assignment to write a paper proving from the Bible that we should strive to maintain *Christian fellowship* with one another no matter how much we disagreed *doctrinally*. I took this assignment in stride and began researching what God has said about *fellowship and doctrine* in the pages of the Bible.

The word *fellowship* occurs seventeen times in sixteen verses. The word *doctrine* is found fifty-one times in fifty verses. [Note: There are five uses of the word “doctrines,” plural; they are **all bad**.]

There is only one verse in the Bible where the two words *fellowship* and *doctrine* are found together. It is Acts 2.42, one of the passages at the head of this article: *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

From that day back in the early 1950s to this very day, that verse has satisfied me that **THERE IS NO**

FELLOWSHIP APART FROM DOCTRINAL UNITY. To put it another way, **two people can only have fellowship in direct proportion to how much they are in doctrinal agreement.** The more two people agree in the doctrine of Christ, the more fellowship they can experience. Conversely, the less doctrinal agreement there is between two people, the less fellowship they will have for one another.

Consider: If you had to spend many years alone with one other person (say in a prison cell or shipwrecked on an otherwise deserted island), and assuming for argument’s sake you are a Primitive Baptist, which would you rather the other person would be—a Primitive Baptist or a Sovereign Grace Missionary Baptist? But if the choice were between a Sovereign Grace Missionary Baptist or an out-and-out Arminian Missionary Baptist? If the choice were more generally between a “Calvinist” and an Arminian, which would you prefer as your companion? Suppose the choice was between an Arminian Protestant and a Hindu? Between a Hindu and a Muslim? In each of these cases, if civil conversation is to be maintained between two people, especially where God, Christ, and the Scriptures are to be discussed, most brethren with a hope in Christ would probably pick the one with whom he had the most in common doctrinally, *whatever their other differences might be.*

Exploring the Acts 2.42 text further, it is evident that the new converts **FIRST** continued steadfastly in **the apostles’ doctrine.**

SECOND, based on their doctrinal unity, they continued in **the apostles’ fellowship.**

Then, **THIRDLY**, based upon the **fellowship in the doctrine of Christ**, they continued with the apostles in “**breaking of bread**,” and that has two ways of being understood:

- (1) Secular and social eating together, and/or
- (2) the communion table.

As for the former, the text is not to be understood as not eating with unbelieving family members or having lunch with friends at work. Paul said of such things, “I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: **yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world**, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; **for then must ye needs go out of the world** (1 Corinthian 5.9f).” In other words, we can never entirely escape the company of the world’s wicked in this life. To do so, “then must ye needs go

out of the world,” Paul said—that is, one would have to die or in some other way leave this world.

In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul is addressing the problem of the fornicator who was in the church at Corinth (verse 1). Therefore he continues (in verse 11), “But now I have written unto you not to keep company, **if any man that is called a brother** be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.”

Again we must ask, is this social and secular, or is it to the communion table (number (2) above)? To answer my own question, I would have to say it is the communion table, number (2) above, which Paul has under consideration. We do not (knowingly) commune at the Lord’s table with fornicators, covetous, idolaters, railers, drunkards, or extortioners and such like, and especially not such as that when they are found within the church. They are to be excluded (“...put away from among yourselves that wicked person,” Paul says).

It appears that Paul is speaking of **the communion of the Lord’s table** because the preceding verses (6-8) are referring to (a) the Passover feast, verse 8; (b) Jesus Himself as being our Passover Lamb who is sacrificed for us, verse 7; (c) leaven and purging it out, verses 6-8; and (d) the unleavened bread associated with both the Passover and the communion table, verse 8.

The bottom line, then, is that we do not commune with anyone within the church who is **known** to be living in open sin, but rather such persons are to be excluded from church membership. “But them that are without [outside the church] God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person (verse 13).”

When we do **commune**, then, it is based upon **fellowship** that is in turn founded upon the **doctrine** of Jesus Christ. This is why Primitive Baptists do not commune with anyone other than their own affiliation, *i.e.*, their own “faith and order.”

The FOURTH item in Acts 2.42 is **prayers**. We may call on good old Uncle Billy-Jack to word a prayer at the dinner table, beside a sickbed, or at a family picnic; but if he is not of the same faith and order with us, we do not ask him to open our church meeting with prayer, close our church meeting with prayer, or pray at any other time in our church meetings, nor do we pray in his church meetings. For prayer in church

meetings, whether theirs or ours, we only pray with or call on those with whom we are in **fellowship** based on the **doctrine** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, with whom we are **in communion**, and *no others*.

Elder Stanley Phillips, for whom we have the deepest regard and respect, is an Absolute Predestinarian who is not in affiliation with the editor of this paper. I believe I can safely describe our relationship as being of the same doctrinal **faith** but of different **orders**. Therefore we are not in **affiliation**, but we can have a genuine **fellowship** in Christ and in His doctrine with or for one another. (If Elder Phillips wishes to differ and comment, I will be happy to print any clarification he would furnish on this complex subject.)

Elder Phillips recently wrote some comments most fitting to the subject at hand. He writes:

“Making man the first cause of anything, is one of the points in that issue. There is a ‘blind spot,’ that creates a ‘channel vision,’ once men lose sight of God as GOD! He created the universe, He has infinite wisdom, He is omnipotent, the universe has ever been His...Nothing is left to the pagan goddess of ‘Chance,’ or ‘Fate.’ He is ever in control of all His creation. Lose sight of God as indeed GOD, and now men, devils, or a combination of both, or chance, coincidence, happenstance, accidents, fortune, or misfortune, all the result of staggering unbelief, takes a haphazard control of all things (in man’s unbelieving eyes), and **Pavlov’s law of classical and operant conditioning becomes the guiding light of natural religionists: a system in nature of rewards and punishments that result in behavioral modification and character development. I train my animals with conditionalism. It works rapidly, and the wildest of animals cannot resist the power of rewards and punishments to conform them to the master’s will. But it is only nature—all nature; nothing spiritual about it.**

“...these men were working with Clark’s Primitives **to merge**, and *the[ir] thought that we are all brothers and ought to get together, is a point worth noting. We can compromise any doctrine that upsets ‘our brethren,’ tone it down, omit it altogether, sacrifice the wholeness of the Truth, merely so ‘we can all fellowship one another.’ The historical results of that Contest is now very evident. Unlimited predestination cannot accommodate limited predestinarianism. They will not mix! I am fully in*

agreement with Dudley that *only individuals holding to the same sentiment ought to form a church; and only churches with a common sentiment ought to fellowship one another*. There is room a plenty on earth for as many fellowships as there are doctrinal and orderly sentiments. No one need barge in upon others and try to change them into their own sentiment. Just find those people with whom he agrees. In that way, there will be less friction. The larger number of people and/or churches united together, the weaker and more disorderly they will be. The smaller number of people and churches in fellowship, the stronger and sounder they will be in doctrine and in order. Why? because there are fewer with whom one has to compromise the truth to get along. As you may guess, *I do not favor any kind of ecumenicalism. I favor small churches in small collections of fellowships, for I have found them the most sound and most loving, and most peaceful or more Christian-like in their deportment one with another*.... Yours, Stan Phillips”

The words are those of Elder Phillips; the bold and other emphases are mine. That’s one way of saying, **Amen, Elder Phillips. We wholeheartedly agree!**

—C. C. Morris

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The following is an outline of principles the readers of *The Remnant* may expect to see maintained in this publication. Under no circumstances do the publishers or writers for *The Remnant* seek to delineate herein a standard of doctrine or views to be imposed upon the readers. Rather, we set these principles before the readers that they may know what general principles guide our efforts. All attempts at declaring articles of faith will be marred by prejudices and frailty, and ours are by no means any exception.

We believe these principles are, in the main, harmonious with the articles of faith published by predestinarian associations and churches of the old order of Baptists known as Primitive, Particular, or Old School Baptists the world over.

1—The eternal existence, sovereignty, immutability, omnipotence, and perfections of Jehovah God; He has revealed Himself as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and these sacred Three are One; Jesus Christ was and is God manifest in the flesh, and in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;

2—The Old and New Testaments in their original languages are the verbally inspired word of God, and they are the complete and only valid guide of faith and practice; the King James Version is the preferred English translation;

3—The will of the eternal God is the first cause of all causes;

4—The absolute predestination of all things;

5—The eternal personal election of the redeemed in Christ, before the world began, and their eternal, vital union with Him; their number is fixed, certain, and sure, and can neither be increased nor diminished; their fall in

their federal head Adam into spiritual death, total depravity, and just condemnation; their utter inability to recover themselves from this fallen state;

6—The blood atonement and redemption by Jesus Christ are for the elect only, and are both efficacious and effectual in accomplishing the will and purpose of God to reconcile His people unto Himself;

7—The sovereign, irresistible, effectual work of the Holy Spirit in quickening the elect of God; the new birth is by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit without the use of any means;

8—The final preservation, perseverance, and eternal happiness of all the sons of God, by grace alone;

9—No works are good works other than those which God Himself has so designated; none of the works called good are left up to men to perform or not, at the creature's discretion; nor do the works of the creature, either before or after regeneration, result in merit accruing to his account in God's sight;

10—The peaceable fruits of righteousness are the certain result of God's working in His people both to will and to do of His good pleasure, and His people will be found walking in paths of righteousness for His name's sake;

11—The separation of church and state;

12—The principles outlined in the Black Rock Address of 1832;

13—The bodily resurrection, first of Christ, and also that of all the dead;

14—The final and eternal judgment; and,

15—The bliss of the redeemed and the torment of the wicked are both eternal and everlasting.