

Fraternization Revisited

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Introduction:

The subject at hand is that of fraternization¹. As used within the circles of the Apostolic Christian Church, the term fraternization has generally referred to attending churches not a part of the Apostolic Christian Church. By extension, it includes the worshipping and yoking together with those belonging to other Christian denominations. It has been a long established standard of the Apostolic Christian Church, since its organization in the early to mid 1800s, to avoid fraternizing with Christians of other denominations. Though this standard is well known within the fellowship, there seems to be some growing problems associated with it.

First, since the word ‘fraternization’ does not appear in the Holy Bible, some believe that we have no biblical basis for this standard. Second, the way we interact and communicate within society has changed dramatically in the past few decades. Third, the societal trend to individualism and personal autonomy has challenged the traditional view of accountability within the church. These considerations have led to questions: Is our position supported biblically? What constitutes fraternization in our present day? Since it is the conviction of the Elder Council of the Apostolic Christian Church (Nazarean) to maintain this standard, this paper attempts to reexamine it and provide some clarity. This paper will express the views of the author and as such, it is not an official position paper for the Elder Body of the Apostolic Christian Church (Nazarean) – Conservative Conference.

In our present culture there is a strong emphasis on diversity and tolerance. To disagree with others regarding their personal beliefs or lifestyle choices is to risk accusation of being narrow minded or intolerant. There are real consequences to being labeled intolerant. Surely these cultural pressures have helped influence a critical view of this standard regarding fraternization. As we examine this subject, our obligation is to our Lord and His Word, regardless of the current philosophies and trends in society.

Confusion in the Contemporary Church:

It is clear that the contemporary Christian Church² is making an enormous effort to communicate the Bible to the unbelieving world and also to meet the needs of all that profess to be Christians. There are a great number of churches, ministries, para-church organizations and publications that number in the millions. Every major facet of life (both social and within the church) is being targeted by someone, somewhere. The efforts range from theology to evangelization, from church life to home life, from personal finances to emotional needs, from social issues to political activism. Looking at the numbers and the dollars spent, one might easily think that we are in the midst of a tremendous revival.

Of course there is the element of crass commercialism. There are those who are “greedy of filthy lucre” and want to become wealthy from their specialized Christian service. But setting this aside there is much being done in the name of the Lord Jesus by people who are very sincere. We should acknowledge this and thank the Lord for the efforts that are being done according to His Will.

But the longer we look at the contemporary Christian Church the more we see that instead of a great revival, there is great confusion. Among the multitudes of professing Christians and the numerous denominations, beliefs vary widely. In fact, there are significant differences among professing Christians usually in direct contradiction with each other. The reason for this is clear; the Scriptures are being interpreted differently. This obvious disunity presents a very confusing picture to the world.

Consider: Some believe and teach that babies should be baptized; others hold that little children can be baptized if they receive Jesus in their heart; others believe that only adults who have repented and believe can be baptized; while others believe that baptism is not necessary. Can all of these positions be correct?

Examples abound: Some believe that the Holy Bible is the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God; while others believe that the Bible we have today is filled with errors and is more the work of man than of God. Some believe in creation as described in Genesis; some believe in evolution as described by scientists. Some believe that the Church is obligated to advance social reform through political action; others see such involvement as entanglement with the affairs of the world. Some believe that the Church has the biblical responsibility to have certain expectations from its membership while others

feel that no one has right to tell others how to live their life. There are conflicting positions on the subject of divorce and remarriage. Some believe that those guilty of adultery can remain in the Church; others believe that they should be excommunicated. We have also seen in the recent past that even “mainline denominations” are in great disagreement among themselves regarding the sin of homosexuality. Some believe that discipline of erring Christians should be practiced in the church but others do not. Some believe that repentance is a condition for salvation; others believe that repentance occurs after salvation. Some believe that Christians are to be modest in their adornment; others believe that this type of thinking is legalistic. Some believe that Christians can bear arms when called into the military; others believe that violence and killing are never justified for the follower of Jesus. Some believe that women can be ordained ministers while others believe that to do so is a violation of Scripture. Some believe that the gift of speaking in tongues is manifested in unintelligible speech while others sharply disagree. For some, smoking and cursing are not issues but for others they are forbidden. Some believe that it is wrong to enjoy sinful entertainment while others believe that it is wrong to judge those who have the liberty to do so. The list of contrary beliefs is not a short one.

It is not only the contradiction in beliefs but also the contradiction between a professed faith and the practiced faith. It is noticed that the same Evangelical Church that loudly decries abortion and the breakdown of marriage in America admits to having a high rate of divorce among its members. Further, a survey conducted by the *Alan Guttmacher Institute* reported in July 2001 that 37.4% of all abortions are performed on Protestant women and 18% of all abortions are done on born-again Protestants. Such a disparity between the profession of Christianity and the life of those professing has surely done much to cause unbelievers to question the veracity of a “life-changing” gospel message.

Another example is seen in the similarities between some contemporary Christian musicians and worldly musicians in their music, their outward appearance, and the way they are idolized by their fans. This is not a matter of individual liberties; this is a matter of conformity to worldly patterns. Is it any wonder that well respected leaders in the Evangelical Church have described the condition of the contemporary Church with such words as: chaos; disaster; reckless; and crises?

Scriptural Principles:

It can be demonstrated that historically that the Apostolic Christian Church has strongly held this concept of keeping separate from other church groups. The question “is this a sound practice” needs to be considered in the clear light of scriptures. This section will look at three Bible principles that are directly related: unity, accountability and discernment.

A) Unity:

Within the Godhead, there is perfect unity between the Father, the Word, and the Spirit. Unity is a fundamental characteristic of God. Unity is also to be a characteristic of His people. It was the earnest prayer of the Lord Jesus in John 17 that His people be one, united and not divided. One as He and His Father are one. We first must be united with Him, and in Him we are to be united with each other.

Obviously the significant contradictions noted in the contemporary Christian Church indicates a situation that is completely contrary to the teaching of the Lord Jesus. The cry of His heart was that His people be united. The confusion and disunity among professing Christians in both belief and practice stands in stark contrast to the will of the Lord as expressed in the following scriptures:

John 13:34-35; 17:11,20-23;	Philippians 1:27; 2:1-5; 3:15-17;
Acts 1:14; 2:1,41-46; 4:32-34;	Colossians 3:12-16;
Romans 12:4-5,9-10; 14:13,19; 15:5;	2 Thessalonians 2:15;
1 Corinthians 1:10; 3:3,11; 11:16; 12:12-27;	1 Peter 3:8;
Ephesians 1:10; 2:6,14-16,19-22; 4:1-6,11-16;	1 John 1:3-6

The meaning is plain: unity is essential. To begin with, our foundation must be the same. Our doctrine, our beliefs, our teachings, these are foundational in the Church. Having the same doctrine is not the only ingredient in having a united Church, however if we are not united in doctrine then what are we united in? Unity without sound doctrine is pointless. In fact if we are not united upon the Word of God, then the Word of God will divide us!

The blessings that accompany unity are experienced within the context of a family of believers. Many of the New Testament teachings are addressed to the church and not to an individual. Even the New Testament books written to individuals speak to the various aspects of the church. The individual believer is defined as he relates to the whole body. In turn, it is within this context that the individual believer receives many blessings and responsibilities. These include mutual accountability,

serving one another, exhorting one another, discipline of the erring, discernment of false teachers, and a joint laboring together to edify the Church and spread the Gospel. If we are not united it will be practically impossible for us to be effective in these. We are meant to be together.

This is not to pretend that our own denomination is experiencing unity as we ought. There is clear need for improvement. Still, our current situation does not change the fact that unity is a principle emphasized in the New Testament scriptures. Which will promote and strengthen unity among us: Our denominational policy of not fraternizing with Christians outside of our denominational circle or the setting aside of this policy?

B) Accountability:

Freedom from suppression, personal rights and independence are all highly valued in a democracy. So strong are these themes and so highly esteemed that many have viewed the United States as a true Christian nation, even to the extent of treating the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights as almost equivalent to the Holy Scriptures. In our day we witness radical cultural change, as the sacrosanct individual rights become the rationale to legalize many things once considered immoral. Personal rights and freedoms are pitted against authority and accountability.

In contrast to the present day ideals of total freedom to pursue whatever one desires, the Bible calls the disciples of Jesus into a community. The Church of Jesus Christ is a spiritual community wherein the members are to hold each other as equals. To quote our We Believe statement, the church “is the visible body of those who are Christian disciples. This (point) distinguishes us from other protestant thinking.” This we earnestly believe, that we are Brothers and Sisters together. The We Believe also states the following in article 7 entitled Church of Christ and Mission:

“The local church is an association of believers, baptized and organized for worship, fellowship, nurture, service and witness (Acts 2:38-44). It is in the congregation that the work of teaching, witnessing, and disciplining is carried on. Congregations are committed to the Word of God and to each other. Consequently, the work of the brotherhood is conducted in a spirit of interdependence, love and submission to one another under the Lordship of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:5-6).”

However, for there to be accountability there must also be authority. The scriptures make clear that authority is vested in the congregation and its leadership; not authority to do what we want, but to enable fulfillment of responsibilities. As noted earlier, these principles of authority and accountability are discounted and criticized in our current culture. Consider the following texts:

Matthew 16:18-20; 18:15-20
Romans 12:9-13, 15-16
1 Corinthians 12:22-27
Galatians 6:1-2
Ephesians 5:21
Philippians 2:3-4
1 Thessalonians 5:12-15

2 Thessalonians 3:6,11-15
1 Timothy 3:5, 4:11, 5:17-21
2 Timothy 2:24-26
Titus 1:10-13
Hebrews 10:24-25, 13:17
James 5:14-16
1 Peter 5:5
1 John 4:7, 20-21

The standard against fraternizing outside of our denominational circle enables us to observe authority and accountability within the brotherhood. Without these principles in place, the scriptural ideals referred to in our We Believe statement (fellowship, nurture, service, witness and discipline) are very difficult, if not impossible, to maintain. A policy that allows for the freedom to wander between various churches groups (whether denominational or non-denominational) results in little commitment to the local congregation, it will undermine authority and result in very little accountability.

C) Discernment:

The Church is warned that deception will be prevalent in the last days. We must discern the spirits to avoid being led away from the Truth. Perhaps the world has influenced us in this area. There seems to be an unspoken presumption that man has evolved to such a level of intelligence that the educated are too knowledgeable to be misled. Do we also suppose that we are beyond the risk of deception? Do we think of “deceiving spirits” in the same way our present culture thinks of “ghosts” and others “myths” of primitive cultures?

As the days continue there is a greater, not lesser, need for discernment. Can we not see that the confusion among so many professing Christians results from deception? This is clearly foretold in the scriptures. We must be discerning or we too will

be deceived. The enemy is camouflaged, he is not obvious. Outwardly his servants look and sound as true servants of God. They are gifted to teach and their teachings appear to be fundamentally sound. So skilled are they in deception that the Lord Jesus told us to evaluate them by their fruits and not only by their words. The following scriptures teach on the very real danger of deception and our need for discernment:

Matthew 7:15-21; 24:4-5,11-12; 18:17

Acts 20:28-31;

Romans 16:17-18;

1 Corinthians 5:11-13; 6:15-18; 10:14-21; 11:19;

2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 11:3,13-15;

Galatians 1:6-9; 5:7-9,15;

Ephesians 4:14;

1 Thessalonians 5:21;

2 Thessalonians 2:3; 3:6-15;

1 Timothy 1:19-20; 6:3-5,20;

2 Timothy 2:16-19; 3:5; 4:2-5;

Titus 1:9-13; 3:10;

Hebrews 13:9;

2 Peter 2:1-3; 3:16-18

1 John 2:19; 4:1; 2 John 6-11; 3 John 9-11;

Jude 3-4; Revelation 2:2;

A related principle to unity, accountability and discernment is that of separation. The idea of separation does not fit well within our current culture, with its emphasis on diversity and tolerance. However the biblical teaching of separation does apply **with respect to apostasy and heresy**. We are instructed to separate from both. Consequently scriptures such as 2 Corinthians 6:17, *“Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate saith the Lord and touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you”* does serve as a basis for why we do not fraternize with apostates and heretics. **This does not mean (as some assume) that we consider all others to be apostates or heretics.** It is important that we make this distinction. The scriptural teaching on separation cannot be overlooked when we are confronted with apostasy and heresy. For more on the biblical principle of separation, please see Appendix A.

In summary, our Lord has called us from this world to be set apart for His holy service. Our separation from sin and error and our close unity as a body of believers enables us to communicate a powerful witness to the lost around us. As they are drawn to the truth and saved, this will bring tremendous glory to God. This great work is opposed by many evil spirits who work to deceive and confuse us. On our part we must be on guard to discern their efforts and avoid their deception.

Response:

What is our response to the great problem of contradiction and disunity among the contemporary Christian Church in view of the scriptural principles of unity, accountability and discernment?

One response is to group controversial subjects under the category of personal liberties and hold that we must not judge the actions of others if well meaning. Another way this is expressed is that we must have unity in the “essentials” and tolerance in the “non-essentials”. While these terms are commonly used, who decides what is essential and what is not? Where does the Lord declare some of his teachings are non-essential?

It is true that regarding matters of the conscience we are taught to forbear one another in love. The Apostle Paul’s writings and his personal example are very helpful. However we do not read that he applied this thinking to doctrinal teachings. It was the same Apostle who by the same Holy Spirit wrote that we must beware of false teachers and false doctrines. They cannot be tolerated without consequence anymore than one can add yeast to bread dough and expect it to not rise. It is irresponsible to assume that if a matter is controversial it is not important.

Another response is more organized and deliberate. The Ecumenical movement is the effort to achieve workable unity among Christians of varying persuasions. Great efforts have been under way for a long time to accomplish this. The efforts of many organizations such as the National Association of Evangelicals, AD 2000, Promise Keepers, Coalition for Revival, and the various Councils of Churches are all examples of this type of response.

One supposed advantage of these responses is that there is less potential for debate and strife since it was previously agreed to disagree on non-essentials. But we must ask what gain is worth the sacrifice of doctrinal unity? This is to ignore the plain meaning of our Lord Jesus in John 17. This is compromise, where we end up tolerating (implicitly approving) that which we once identified as error. What a tragic loss of the true, holy witness of Jesus Christ! Does not this bring confusion? The following quotations are taken from leading theologians regarding the Contemporary Christian Church:

“What I see in the Evangelical Church today is that we do not trust God to speak through the Bible...we in the Evangelical Church are bringing in all of the world’s methods...to get the job done. what they think we have to do today is, number

one, entertain people. You have to put on a show. I've noticed in the Evangelical Church today, in countless churches, there is nothing like worship anymore... Why don't we have pastoral prayers... Why not? Because it's boring to most people that's why not. We don't want to bore people we want to entertain them, make them happy... so we change our music to fit the contemporary needs, we get rid of the prayers and even sermons change...

"No one is interested in the Truth anymore, they are only interested in unity."

The response ultimately chosen by our forefathers was to not fraternize outside of our denominational circle. Not only to avoid confusion, but also with the intention of keeping the biblical principles of unity, accountability and discernment. It has enabled us to work closely together and to avoid an unequal yoking with those who have different doctrines. It has been our experience that this standard has promoted doctrinal unity and a closeness of fellowship that is almost impossible otherwise. For us, the brother and sister relationship is very real.

Application & Clarification:

Historically, our position regarding fraternization has meant that we do not visit other churches or participate in the gatherings of Christians not belonging to the Apostolic Christian Church. Not for the purposes of worship, bible teaching or similar programs such as prayer meetings, Christian music concerts, or fellowship groups. This is especially true with the sharing of communion³. Though all are welcome to attend our worship services, our pulpits, teaching positions and communion tables have only been open to those whose membership is within the Apostolic Christian Church.

What about today? Should the above historical precedents be made into a list and then updated from time to time? While this conference of elder brothers still believes that the above are examples of fraternization, there are problems with list making. First, the list is never complete. Someone will always be able to find a way around a rule. Second, the making of a list will encourage a legalistic approach. Debates and arguments over what should or should not be included on a list will draw much attention to the list and ultimately away from the biblical principles of unity, accountability and discernment. This does not mean that we cannot be specific, but that list making is not sufficient.

The word fraternization is not found in the Bible. How can this idea be biblical?

That this word is not used in the Bible does not mean that the idea conveyed by that word is somehow un-biblical. There are other words that are not found in the Bible but are commonly used to describe scriptural subjects. Words such as: trinity, rapture, and millenium. The idea associated with the word is what we must test. Other words have been used instead of 'fraternization'. We are not examining or defending the use of a particular word, but the idea associated with it.

Doesn't this standard imply that we are the only true Christians?

Not at all. This standard is based upon the scriptural principles of unity, accountability & discernment. It is not based upon an assumption that we alone understand the truth and all others are deceived. Such an extreme position has been held by some but it is not the position of the elder body. To the contrary we read in Revelation 7: 9 that the multitude gathered before the throne will be from every nation, kindred, people, and tongue. Also in Luke 13:29, "they shall come from the east and from the west and from the north and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God." As the Apostolic Christian Church (Nazarean) we see ourselves as a family of laborers sent into the great harvest of God, not as His only laborers.

There are two other points that we should make. Just as we should not assume that Christians outside of our fellowship are not true believers, so we also should not assume that anyone who does professes to be a Christian is in fact a true believer. Also, "judge not" does not mean we cannot be discerning. We must make righteous judgment (discernment) when confronted with error. It is not we who judge, but the Word of God. In this we must be faithful to stand for the truth of God's Word. We must protect the sheep from the wolves.

How is sound doctrine challenged?

We are confronted in many more ways today than in previous generations. Through such avenues as Christian bookstores, Christian radio stations and a multitude of Internet websites, we have easy access to contemporary Christian thought. Another avenue is the commentary printed in the Study Bibles that are purchased. Through these avenues many different understandings and convictions are circulated. Through these avenues we are exposed to teachings and understandings that are not sound. To recognize this is not to categorically judge that all these are false or that everyone else is either deceived or a deceiver. This is to take seriously the warnings about end-time deception; this is to be vigilant and spiritually responsible.

Should we read Christian teachings penned by other authors, or visit other websites, or listen to Christian radio programming, produced by those who do not belong to our denomination?

This question is of long-term consequence. Many who were undiscerning have been misled by the false teachers they have listened to. Not all are able to discern well. The real answer to this question requires more questions.

- Am I being exposed to winds of doctrines that are not true to the clear teachings of Scriptures?
- Does this promote a different understanding of salvation?
- Does this book or website, etc., glorify God or man?
- Is the Lord Jesus being overshadowed by the attention given to the leader of this particular ministry?
- Is the role of the Church de-emphasized?
- Is holiness being promoted or redefined?
- Does this promote separation from the world or accommodation with worldly lifestyles and philosophies?
- Will the net effect of this activity cause me to become discontented and critical of my brethren?
- Am I finding less time for my personal devotions consisting of bible reading and prayer because I am spending more time learning what others think?
- Is this building unity or disunity between my brethren and myself?

Ultimately, the fruit of our decisions will show if we have valued and upheld the biblical principles of unity, accountability and discernment.

Is it not possible to work together with someone on a spiritual project and not consider them brothers? To try to prohibit all efforts to work with other Christian organizations is not realistic.

The purpose of this standard of not fraternizing is meant to keep the biblical principles of unity, accountability and discernment. For this reason, promoting and utilizing such service organizations that already exist within the Apostolic Christian Church churches would be our priority. Still, it is possible to send money through another Christian organization or otherwise utilize their efforts, (i.e. sending Bibles to China, or participating in Home school support organizations) but we are still obligated to weigh the potential impact on doctrinal unity, accountability and discernment.

How should we relate to others who profess to be Christians?

Elder Brother Bob Freund in his writing, *Fraternization - Ecumenism in its Infancy* expressed the following as guidelines to our relationship with other Christians.

- 1) We shall not stand in judgment of them. Romans 14:4
- 2) We shall not be bitter against them. Mark 9: 38-40
- 3) We shall believe that God knows his own by name and will gather all to himself when their labors are finished. 2 Timothy 2: 19; John 10: 14-16

In his writing he points out that fraternization leads to compromise. This compromise paves the way for the ecumenical efforts to unite Christians of all persuasions. This is why the above guidelines do not “suggest or imply that we should join others in their efforts for Christ.”

Conclusion:

There are many reasons why fellow believers want to worship and work together with those of other Christians. These may include being impressed by outward packaging, lack of stability, lack of spirituality, peer pressure and dissatisfaction with our doctrine. Other reasons may be discouragement with internal strife, disappointment with the use of shallow reasoning, restlessness from lack of opportunity (real or imagined) for Christian service and being frustrated with unreasonable brothers. It is beyond the scope of this paper to address all of the reasons why members fraternize. It will be important to investigate these reasons to better understand the needs of individual brethren and our needs as a brotherhood.

It has been the purpose of this paper to demonstrate that our historical and current position regarding fraternization is a reasonable application of the scriptural principles of unity, accountability and discernment. To this end, may the Lord bless our mutual efforts to the edifying of His Church.

We live in the prophesied times of deception, all the more dangerous because the enemy has disguised himself as one of us. We cannot afford to overlook the efforts of our enemy. The stakes are very high. It is our fervent love for one another and our unyielding devotion to the whole counsel of God that will loudly demonstrate to the surrounding world that we belong to Him, that we have His truth not only on our tongues but also in our hearts.

Appendix A ~ Separation

The Holy Bible teaches that our Creator is a Holy God, He is separated from all that is sinful. If there were no sin present in God's Creation there would be no separation. Sadly, the reality is that sin is very present in this world and among all men. Man's very nature has been corrupted by sin and this results in willful disobedience to the Word of God. Judgment is pronounced upon everyone who refuses to return and be reconciled to Him. Only through His beloved Son Jesus can the separation be replaced with fellowship. When we enter into fellowship with the Father and the Son, we must be separated from all that they are separated from. Separated from the world, we are set apart unto Him. More specifically, the purpose of separation is two fold, sanctification and service.

Beginning with Abraham, the people of God were separated from all other nations. This was clearly required by the many moral, ceremonial and civil laws that they received from God. These governed the details of their private, religious, and social life. The keeping of God's Law was obligatory and enforced under the threat of penalty. Among the many important reasons for these laws was that these prevented Israel from having free interaction with other people groups. In keeping the Law, Israel kept its distinct identity. As a uniquely separated people Israel could faithfully testify of the one true God, His existence, His holiness and His will.

Genesis 12:1-2, 18:18; Exodus 19:4-6; Deuteronomy 7:6-9.

In the New Testament, the Lord Jesus also called His disciples to be a separated people. In His own words: "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you Nay, but rather division". (Luke 12:51) In John's Gospel (7:43, 9:16, 10:19) we read that there were divisions among the people because of Jesus. It was His Word that brought division. He pointed out that separation is inevitable between those who embrace His Word and those who reject His Word: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." (Matthew 10:34-36) Repeatedly, the Church is exhorted and admonished to have no fellowship with the works of darkness. The purpose for this separation is made clear: that we might be in fellowship with Him, for in Him there is no darkness at all. As a sanctified people we serve Him by showing forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. We cannot be in light and darkness simultaneously.

Viewed in the Scriptures, biblical separation is positive. Without it we would not belong to Him. In summary, consider the passage of 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. In particular verses 17-18: Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you and ye shall be my sons and daughters saith the Lord Almighty."

Mark 10: 28-30; John 3:19-21; Ephesians 5:3-15; Hebrews 4:12; 1 Peter 2:9-10; 1 John 1:3-6.

Having considered that the two-fold purpose of separation is for sanctification and service, let us also consider that the expression of separation is likewise two fold, inward and outward. That which begins in the heart will be shown outwardly. When the Lord Jesus reproved the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23, He spoke of the contradiction between their inward condition and their outward expression. This contradiction did not mean that outward expression is not important, rather that theirs was a pretense. It was hypocritical. The point here is that our outward expression (which includes appearance) should reflect the inner experience of fellowship with our Lord.

It has been observed that if separation is in word only and not in deed, inward but not outward, professed but not practiced, then assimilation into the surrounding world will be very hard to resist. On the other hand, if separation is maintained outwardly but the purpose is forgotten, the outward is over-emphasized and the inward is de-emphasized, then the move to isolationism will also be very hard to resist. Unfortunately, in Israel we find examples of both errors.

In the Old Testament, often Israel did not keep outward separation. This quickly led to failure and defeat. In the book of Numbers we read the account of Balaam and Balak. The prophet Balaam advises Balak, King of the Moabites, to befriend the Israelites and to encourage intermarriage. Though specifically prohibited from doing this, Israel accepts the Moabite invitation of friendship and fellowship and consequently suffers the wrath of God.

2 Kings 17 describes for us the confusing circumstance from which the Samaritans originated. There was a mixing together of the peasant Jews who were not taken captive by the Assyrians, with the heathens that were migrated into their land. There

was a vain attempt to please the God of the Land (Jehovah) by keeping His ways and at the same time accommodate the heathen religions. This compromise sealed the spiritual disaster of the Northern Kingdom.

By the time of the New Testament, Israel had turned from idolatry. (The term Pharisee itself means, “separated”) Yet they ignored that the purpose of God’s calling to Abraham was that in his seed, all nations would be blest. As did the prophet Jonah, they too believed that God’s blessings and concern were primarily for Israel. As the purpose of their separation was forgotten, they degenerated into pride and formality.

In conclusion, we must remember the purposes of our separation: First, we would be in holy fellowship with our Lord. Otherwise a profession of inner personal fellowship and sanctification without true outward separation from sin and error is useless emotion and a deceptive feeling. Remember the example of ancient Israel, compromising their way to total defeat.

Second, that we are separated so that we may serve our Lord. We are separated to be a light to the lost; a beacon for those disoriented and confused. ‘Christian’ service without sanctification is not Christian. Outward expression (separation) without an inner experience of fellowship is form without power. It is dead, it is hypocrisy and it is repulsive. Remember the proud, legalistic scribes and Pharisees.

Fraternization: This subject has to do with the promiscuous association of members of our church with those of other faiths for the purpose of working together for the Lord. These activities include evangelistic crusades, Youth for Christ, Inter-Varsity, intermarriage, communion outside of our fellowship, etc. Such activities have proven to be a harmful relationship for those who indulge in such practices. Doctrine, methods of worship, unwholesome practices and the conviction for the propagating the principles of a united church are some of the issues being forced upon us for acceptance. As a body of believers we cannot accept these things if we are to remain separated from the present apostasy. 2 Tim. 4:1-4, 2 Cor. 6:17

Burcar, Stephen

ACCN Elder Brother ~ 1966 Youth Rally

There are hundreds of different denominations which today are being, so to speak, gobbled up by one or another council of churches...What do you think would happen to us if we let ourselves be drawn into this Babylonian mess? The Lord distinctly tells us to come out of her my people. Revelation 18:4 Re: evangelistic crusades... he states that from the moment one makes his decision, he belongs to the Lord...If these decisions are a guarantee of salvation, why do the largest percentage continue to live in their sinful state? It is because they have never been born again... ..by whose church method does one become born again, since we know that some say, "just believe" others say "be sprinkled" still others say "join the church." Can you detect the inconsistency of trying to lead me to Christ by these various methods?

Freund, Robert W.

Fraternization - Ecumenism in its Infancy ~ Apostolic Christian Publishing Co. 1975

Notice please the emphasized words of verse 20: "they are again entangled therein". This entanglement comes only when one has exposed himself to other teachings and practices through fraternization with others outside his fellowship. This begins very innocently at the outset, as he becomes involved with other "fundamental" groups having similar doctrines and practices. Similar is not the same as discriminate identification given the church in Ephesians 4: 4-6...True believers can be deceived and swallowed up by fraternizing with or tolerating unsound doctrinal teachers whom Satan uses to infiltrate and gradually destroy the spiritual vitality of God's people.

Freund, George

ACCN Minister & Elder Meeting ~ Mansfield, Ohio ~ January 18, 1975

I can think of no greater single danger to the church than that practice...the elder brothers totally reject the practice of attendance at evangelistic crusade...communion outside of our fellowship or the sharing of our pulpits with those of other denominations.... it was agreed in Akron, at our meeting...Anyone within the church who fraternizes with other denominations will not be permitted to take any active part in the church... That means he does not pray, he does not teach, he does not advise the youth, he is silent and should consider it fortunate to retain his membership.

Elder Body of the ACCA

Winds of Doctrine ~ 1986

Respect for the sincere efforts of others to further God's work is essential (Mark 9:38-40). However, this respect should not lead to a form of spiritual paralysis which makes it impossible to declare a particular belief as false simply because it is embraced by well-intentioned individuals. Doctrines and practices which are in conflict with the Word of God must be identified as false.... ..It would be totally inexcusable on the part of the Apostolic Christian Brotherhood to give in to these modernistic influences at the very time some of their failures are being acknowledged by evangelicals themselves.

Weingartner, Paul

Fraternization ~ 2001

Those who would like to see a far more open attitude about fraternization in our churches should take a closer look at II John 1.6-11. What I read this as saying is that anyone not abiding in the doctrine of Jesus Christ is not of God, and we are not to receive them into our houses, or wish them God speed...It will be far harder than you think to find a denomination that follows the doctrine of Jesus Christ as we do. Just Christ's teachings on divorce would be a great dividing line, alone. Let us not get carried away in a spirit of egalitarianism and disregard clear teaching from the Bible.

Appendix C ~ Quotations from Non-Apostolic Christian Church sources

Swiss Brethren Conference **The Schleithem Confession** ~ Article IV - Separation from the Abomination ~ 1527

...From this we should learn that everything which is not united with our God and Christ cannot be other than an abomination which we should shun and flee from. By this is meant all Catholic and Protestant works and church services, meetings and church attendance...

Spurgeon, Charles H. **Another Word Concerning the Down-Grade** ~ Sword and Trowel ~ August 1887

... our solemn conviction is that things are much worse in many churches than they seem to be, and are rapidly tending downward... ask yourself, How much farther could they go? What doctrine remains to be abandoned? What other truth to be the object of contempt? A new religion has been initiated, which is no more Christianity than chalk is cheese; and this religion, being destitute of moral honesty, palms itself off as the old faith with slight improvements, and on this plea usurps pulpits which were erected for gospel preaching. The Atonement is scouted, the inspiration of Scripture is derided, the Holy Spirit is degraded into an influence, the punishment of sin is turned into fiction, and the resurrection into a myth, and yet these enemies of our faith expect us to call them brethren, and maintain a confederacy with them!

At the back of doctrinal falsehood comes a natural decline of spiritual life, evidenced by a taste for questionable amusements and a weariness of devotional meetings.... The case is mournful. Certain ministers are making infidels. Avowed atheists are not a tenth as dangerous as those preachers who scatter doubt and stab at faith.... It now becomes a serious question how far those who abide by the faith once delivered to the saints should fraternize with those who have turned aside to another gospel. Christian love has its claims, and divisions are to be shunned as grievous evils; but how far are we justified in being in confederacy with those who are departing from the truth?

Bender, Harold S. **The Anabaptist Vision** ~ Herald Press ~ 1944

The Anabaptists could not understand a Christianity which made regeneration, holiness, and love primarily a matter of intellect, of doctrinal belief, or of subjective "experience," rather than one of the transformation of life. They demanded an outward expression of the inner experience. Repentance must be "evidenced" by newness of behavior.

The focus of the Christian life was to be not so much the inward experience of the grace of God, as it was for Luther, but the outward application of that grace to all human conduct.... The true test of the Christian, they held, is discipleship. The great word of the Anabaptists was not "faith" as it was with the reformers, but "following".

McGrath, William R. **Separation throughout Church History** ~ 1966

When in the course of time a denomination becomes so corrupt that it is no longer possible to expel unrepentant transgressors, it became the duty of the faithful minority to withdraw themselves from those that walk disorderly and not according to the Scriptural traditions and principles of the saintly forefathers. Because of their sharp separation from both pagan culture and pagan church systems, these faithful Christians were often falsely accused...

Schaeffer, Francis A. **The Great Evangelical Disaster** ~ 1983

Here is the great evangelical disaster -- the failure of the evangelical world to stand for truth as truth. There is only one word for this -- namely accommodation: the evangelical church has accommodated to the world spirit of the age.

MacArthur Jr, John **Charismatic Chaos** ~ 1991

Apparently, these people, while being "Dear Brothers and Sisters," are not dear enough to deserve to be taught the truth. Does real Christian love leave them in a spiritually debilitating error, thus out of God's will and out of the place of blessing, misrepresenting God's sacred truth? Is that love that calls us to do that? But this is the kind of thinking that pervades the Church... The legacy of such an attitude is not unity, and the legacy of such an attitude is not peace, believe me; it is confusion, it is turmoil, and it is chaos.

¹ **Fraternize:** to associate or mingle as brothers. **Fraternization:** the working together by association or formal organization of persons, for a common purpose, interest, or pleasure, in a fraternal or brotherly manner. Freund, Robert W., *Fraternization - Ecumenism in its Infancy* Apostolic Christian Publishing Co.

² The term “Contemporary Christian Church” simply refers to all that in our present time profess to be a Christian.

³ The sharing of communion represents a spiritual unification not only with our Lord, but also with those we share the communion table with. 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, 6:17. Therefore taking communion with those outside of our Apostolic Christian Brotherhood indicates that we are spiritually joined with them.