

Biblical teaching, and has much to commend it on the ground of practical advantage.

- (9) Having said this, we realize that the problem of manifesting the unity of Christ's church must somehow be resolved. Denominations attempt to give witness to a broader expression of the unity of the Body of Christ than could be given through individual local churches by manifesting the unity of distinctive beliefs and practices between a number of local churches. They also manifest desires to facilitate certain broader functions of the churches that can be carried out more efficiently by a number of churches than by individual local churches.
- (10) One major obstacle in the way of the churches' expression of Christian unity is the attitude of denominationalism
- (11) Denominations and denominationalism must not be confused. Denominations are groups of Christian individuals or churches with distinctive constellations of beliefs and practices; denominationalism is the attitude that one's own denomination's constellation of distinctives is the only one genuinely Christian, and that therefore other denominations' constellations are either sub-Christian or non-Christian. denominationalism evidences an overweening pride in its own ability to determine final truth; sometimes it evidences unscriptural attitudes toward others, including the attitude of schism.
- (12) The sinful attitude of schism is spoken of in I Corinthians 12:15-27. in verse 21 this attitude is expressed in term of the human body: "And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you;' or again to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' " And in verse 25 Paul explains why God has composed the body in the way that He has: "that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another."
If a Christian takes the attitude that another Christian is not of the body of Christ, that is schism. If a Christian church takes the attitude that another Christian church is not of the body of Christ, that is schism. Schism results in tearing apart, rending the body.
- (13) Some denominations have sprung up to express the sinful attitude of schism. Some have sprung up to satisfy the ego needs of human leaders, or to overemphasize a very minor theological hobby-horse. Such denominations are the result of specifically sinful attitudes and actions; and as such deserve to be censured and to have their motivating force replaced. They may even need to be disbanded.
- (14) Some denominations have sprung up out of sincere desires to recover or preserve areas of major truth, or to maintain a witness to some historical tradition, or to give expression to a unique theological insight. Such denominations, so long as they do not adopt the attitude of denominationalism, on the one hand, and adopt the view that other Christian denominations are fellow branches of the body of Christ, on the other, are not sinful per se; and do not militate against the unity of the church.