

But Thou Oh Man of God

by Edwin Fesche

The brethren movement emphasizes the importance of Scriptural literalness, renouncement of expediences, and the presence of the Spirit in the local church, calling believers to separate from worldly Christianity and uphold the principles of the New Testament Church.

Scripture: Numbers 10:29, Matthew 7:7, John 2:17, Romans 14:5, 2 Corinthians 3:17, Ephesians 3:10

Topics: "Church Principles", "Separation From World"

Description

Edwin Fesche discusses the history and principles of the brethren movement, emphasizing their adherence to the cardinal truths of Scripture while differing in views on Church Truth and the role of an officiating minister. The brethren movement advocates for separation from worldly Christianity, leading to their unpopularity but also stripping away pride and emphasizing a return to New Testament Church principles. Fesche challenges believers to prioritize Scripture in upholding brethren principles, highlighting the importance of being fully persuaded by God's Word rather than human shortcomings or popular opinions.

Transcript

After 2,000 years of Church history, the backward look is disturbing and the present perplexing. The brethren movement has no quarrel with the great cardinal truths of Scripture. It does, however, beg to differ in its view on Church Truth. Mong with this it finds sufficient Scriptural grounds for rejecting an officiating minister. This practice makes us a people rejected by some of the best elements of Christendom. Consistent with this there comes the call to separate from the world and worldly Christianity, which adds to brethren's unpopularity. One good point out of all this is that it tends to take pride from man because of being out of step with some cherished opinions. As Saint Athanasins held to the truth of Christ's absolute deity in his day when such was attacked by Arius; as Luther recovered the gospel smothered by a gaudy ritual and corruption; so the brethren are convinced that they have reintroduced the principles of the New Testament Church. Only those who are fully persuaded that this claim has the support of Scripture will be sufficiently attracted to the brethren and endure to the end. Shallow convictions will not do here. One finds himself a square peg in a round hole in his associations with most other Christians. Resentment is provoked when commended workers prove that service can be performed apart from a distinctive name, organization and distasteful methods of raising money. Such Scriptural literalness and renouncement of expediences are not proving appealing to the young. There are a couple of generations that have been born into the movement. They know nothing of the exercise that led their

forefathers to such spiritual discretion. There is the temptation to join para church movements that are in many respects more successful. Those that could have stayed where their roots are have oped for greener pastures, or have they?

If brethren principles can be upheld by Scripture, and I believe they can, then it behooves the searching soul to give this inquiry a top priority. Just as the sinner can find excuses aplenty for refusing Christ because of the behavior of some professing Christians he knows; so not a few have excused themselves from identifying with the assemblies and tragic failures because of the poor showing of some. The only answer to this is, "what saith the Scripture?" Human shortcomings in this area should in no wise be allowed to annul a revealed truth. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" Matt. 7:7. Then, after an honest waiting on God, "let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" Romans 14:5. The local church should be a microcosm of the church universal. It could be just two or three are gathered to the Name of Christ and capable of developing into an autonomous body coming behind in no gift. It is described as God's workmanship, or as the margin renders the word, masterpiece. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God" Eph. 3:10.

Without being sectarian there are sound reasons for being preferential. The local assembly, or assemblies, warrant our undivided support. This is not an interdenominational movement. It is a modest attempt to approximate the will of God concerning His Church. If this is so, and it is to some of us, then what was said of Christ when He cleansed the temple should characterize us, "the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" John 2:17.

Consistent with this go the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, no promiscuous financial appeals in the Church. Those who minister the Word are brothers among their brethren and recognized by their possession of a Spirit imparted gift.

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" II Corinthians 3:17. The open meeting as outlined in I Cor. 14 is the forte of the brethren. Appreciated and extolled by those who have discovered its sweetness, it revolves around the breaking of bread. We say to all pure in doctrine and morally upright, "come thou with us, and we will do thee good" Num. 10:29.

The words of another supplement our thoughts. "But a person may ask, are any upon that ground? I can only say that the Christians who fall back on Scripture, owning the faithful presence of the Spirit in the assembly on earth, are taking an immense deal of trouble for a delusion if they are not. They are very foolish in acting as they do unless they are sure that it is according to the mind of God. Ought you to have more doubt how Christians should meet together for worship or mutual edification than about other directions in the word of God?"

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