

## With What Do You Walk Away?

### Part Two

In part one of our installments, we started the thought process with:

“Conversations, ‘a talk, especially an informal one, between two or more people, in which news and ideas are exchanged’ (Oxford), are always interesting if each party walks away considering what ‘news and ideas’ have been ‘exchanged:’ what is said, and what is heard. The analogy is often given setting the image of the words of one person getting on the bus, and then what the other person heard when the words get off the bus. Thus, the importance of definitions.

Having established the need for an understanding of definitions, it sorta, kinda, falls into an area of understanding background and/or indoctrination. During the process of a conversation with a gentleman concerning the affects of the LGBTQ+ community on local churches (and the demise thereof), the question came up concerning “church leadership:” Groups, i.e., Methodist, Episcopal, United Methodist Episcopal, Assembly of God, Acts 2 Journey, Crossover (“closely associated with the Episcopal rather than Catholic) and many reorganization efforts (if you want to take an enlightening journey, do a “search” on your most favorite browser, on “types of church leadership”). In reference to denominational leadership, i.e., Councils (Council, in the Christian Church, a meeting of bishops and other leaders to consider and rule on questions of doctrine, administration, discipline, and other matters.), (Ency. Britannica), Synods (Synod, [from Greek *synodos*, “assembly”], in the Christian church, a local or provincial assembly of bishops and other church officials meeting to resolve questions of discipline or administration) (Ibid). On the fringes, there are Conferences, such as, the "Renegade Pastors Conference", sponsored by the Church Leader Insights, unfolds at the picturesque Orlando Convention Center. This unique gathering dares Christian leaders to challenge the status quo and reimagine their ministries. The focus is on personal and ministerial growth, forward-thinking leadership, and improving church health. A haven for innovators, this conference encourages attendees to break free from convention, adopt best practices, and chart bold, new paths in their mission to serve, making it a truly 'renegade' experience for modern-day pastors.” Whatever your flavor, there are organizations to stimulate your religious tastebuds.

As the conversation progressed, the subject of autonomy came up. It was then affirmed that the “church of Christ” is comprised of a local autonomy (not a part of the “United Churches of Christ”), with bishops, deacons, and saints (Phil. 1:1), and is not a part of a conference, synod, or convention. Although there are groups that identify themselves as autonomous (Baptist, Methodist, Assembly of God), they do not fit the definition, i.e., “the right of an organization, country, or region to be independent and govern itself” (Cambridge Dictionary), in so much as they are associated with conferences, synods, and/or conventions, consisting of “a meeting of bishops and other leaders to consider and rule on questions of doctrine, administration, discipline, and other matters” (Ibid). An example of this was made evident when a “local pastor” spoke of a group of local delegates, i.e., pastors within the state, that assembled to discuss such matters. Now, they profess to be autonomous, but upon further inquiry, it was determined that they assemble to discuss doctrine, etc., and then return to their perspective churches. Although they are autonomous, they take back to their perspective constituents what the collective group of pastors had determined.

Nevertheless, when I stated that the “church of Christ” is non-denominational (another term utilized is un-denominational), and not a part of a council, synod, and/or convention, the gentleman with whom I was

speaking said, “so you make your own rules,” as if the collective is free to establish whatever doctrine they wish, apart from the scriptures. I found it interesting and will pursue the issue as time and opportunity permits.

The fact of the matter is that every member of a religious organization: Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, or Assembly of God (that I have spoken with), all affirm that they follow the Bible as their only rule of doctrine and practice.

Doctrine and Practice is at the core of every religious division. Within the Jewish realm, doctrine and practice separated the Sadducees and the Pharisees: “But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees: touching the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees; and the assembly was divided” (Acts 23:6-7).

The way many of the locals view the problem is to adopt an ecumenical position, i.e., “of, relating to, or representing the whole of a body of churches: promoting or tending toward worldwide Christian unity or cooperation, worldwide or general in extent, influence, or application...tending to support and encourage unity among different religions: an ecumenical movement” (Webster), i.e., as long as you believe in Jesus everyone is okay (that’s my commentary). I would think the immediate question, would be, “believe what about Jesus?”

In our next installment, I would like to consider the general thought process that every individual associated with a religious organization will affirm that they only follow the Bible in doctrine and practice.

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