

The Errors of Independence

By Mitch Allman

Let me begin by saying that it was a happy, glorious day when I first repented of my sins and came to Christ Jesus for salvation. I was then under the preaching of an Independent Baptist Church as I am currently. As I was content and happy to be considered and Independent Baptist then, eleven years later I am more assured that that's what I should be; having had time to study and try the other groups. I have always held to the philosophy that if someone could show me a group of believers more dedicated to rightly dividing the Word and more given to the work and love of God than Independent Baptists, then I would leave the Baptist camp and join ranks with that faithful number *post haste*. But I have never read about or heard of a group of believers in the United States more concerned with staying on the *strait and narrow* than this group called Baptists.

Now, I know that when someone says "Baptist", it may mean various things. For instance; we have the Southern Baptist; the Primitive Baptist, Congregational Baptists, the Sovereign Grace Baptists, Free-Will Baptists; Hard-Shell Baptists and Baptist Briders and so on. But we'll focus our attention on Independent Baptists and what has become a problem for those of that small number.

One of the many things that trouble the Independent Baptists is our *camp* mentality. Somehow or another, through the desire to be separated and consecrated, we've 'separated' and 'consecrated' ourselves into our own *independent camps*. For instance; there's the Shouting & Running The Aisles Camp, and the Non-Shouting & Running The Aisles Camp; then there's the Southern Gospel Music Camp and the Bluegrass Gospel Music camp, and in opposition to them we have the Conservative Music Camp; and let's not forget the camp that says it's OK to have a Mission Board, and the Camp which thinks Mission Boards are of the Devil; the Anti-Horn-Rimmed Glasses Camp; or how about the Camp that allows the use of bass guitars & drums in the church, and the opposing Camp who cuts off fellowship with all such; and then the Camp who teaches that every believer should remember the very day and hour of their conversion, and the Camp who teaches that it's not necessary; and of course the Get Rid Of Your TV Camp side by side with the TV is OK camp. Space constraints limit me from mentioning the Seminary Trained & the Anti-Seminary Camps, the Textus Receptus Camp, and the KJV1611-Only Camp; the Anti-Bus Ministry Camp; the Harold Sigtler Camp, the Anti-Mustache Camp, the Ruckman Camp, the Hyles-Anderson Camp; the 1-2-3-Repeat-After-Me Soul-Winner Camp, the Anti-Divorced & Remarried Minister Camp, etcetera, etcetera.

I'm sure you get the point. In spite of how well we may stand on certain issues, one must admit that we are one of the most fractured and splintered groups of believers. Yes, we like to call ourselves *independent* and *autonomous*. We like to stress the fact that we

have no hierarchy of Bishops or Cardinals and Councils to submit to. In this we are correct, for this is the New Testament example. The local church should have none other than its pastor and the Word of God to appeal to in matters of faith and practice; dispute and uncertainty. But as we have not been careful with this liberty (for I believe it is a 'liberty'), many have abused it to the extent where today, members of Church X can hardly find fellowship with Church Z across town because Church X and Church Z don't dot their I's and cross their T's the same way.

From the laundry list above (and you can add your own to the list) we may venture to say that some of our cherished Holy Ghost convictions have run amok to the extent where they begin to isolate us from others of like faith; and all in the name of "independence". But the end result cannot possibly be God's intent. And I say nothing of the 'convictions' that are simply 'preferences' in reality. I remember the words of an old country preacher, who while he was preaching was asked what denomination he would belong to if he wasn't a Baptist. The old preacher thought for a moment, lowered his glasses and answered, "Well, if I wasn't a Baptist, I guess I'd be....ashamed". I too, like that preacher, wouldn't give up being a Baptist for nothin'. But I am leery about some of those things above that can very well cause *shame*. Brethren, let us be watchful of the Enemy's devices to divide and conquer, and be circumspect in these areas so that the work of God may continue. We should hold fast to Holy Ghost convictions, but we should never allow our convictions to become so lop-sided that they prevent us from partaking with or being a blessing to some other Pilgrim on the SAME path, with the SAME motives, having a COMMON salvation and pressing towards a COMMON goal.

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