

programs. That is the main reason that fellowship must be the basis for associational relationships.

A football team is not the sole work of its brilliant backfield men. Eleven men on the field contribute to the success of the play though one man may carry the ball.

The NTAIBC churches have blended their voices in a protest against the flood of ecumenism. Some of the churches are large, and some of them are small. But all have an equal voice in the sounding of the separatist call to arms.

NTAIBC was not born out of the modernist-fundamentalist controversy although the fire of such controversy did purify many churches. The NTAIBC received the fruits of that struggle through another generation. NTAIBC was formed as an alternative to the softness of the new evangelicalism, which had infiltrated other cooperative groups. It has stood watching the flotsam and jetsam of destroyed churches being swept down the inclusivistic stream of ecumenism. NTAIBC has never apologized for its declared position.

We believe that there are many who have not bowed the knee to Baal. We believe that God is selecting an alert Gideon's band as a testimony to His power and strength in victory. NTAIBC may be only a voice crying in the wilderness of ecumenicity, yet it cries. However faint the cry, the call is the call of Gideon for victory . . . *"The Sword of the Lord, and of Gideon"* (Judges 7:18). NTAIBC recognizes the words of the Lord to be the analysis of its service.

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." – Zechariah 4:6

For further information on how your church can share in the fellowship of the NTAIBC, write:

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NEW TESTAMENT ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT BAPTIST CHURCHES:

A VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

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Why should the New Testament Association of Independent Baptist Churches exist? Is it just one more organization that claims the time from the busy church calendar? Is it just the fulfilling of the herd instinct for a few churches or a few pastors? Is it a base for the few who are hungry to have ruling power?

The NTAIBC should have died long ago. Many predicted its death. Others just sat by and waited its demise. Some turned their backs on it and sought to ignore its evident appeal for fellowship.

Its birth was awaited with high hopes. Yet the moment of its birth was marked by contention, misunderstanding, and frustration among the family members. Yet it lived! Even some who had espoused its cause and need fell by the wayside, yet it lived! Its feeble attempt to walk among its peers was viewed with curious indifference. Yet it lived!

Those that remained vitally interested and related to the NTAIBC realized that they were few in number. They believed, however, that their association must reveal the warmth of real fellowship, the strength of a Biblically centered ministry and the blessing of a cooperative relationship. Meticulously, and perhaps tremblingly, they followed the pattern of Biblical challenge of the early church. They continued *"in doctrine, fellowship, prayer, and praise"* (Acts 2:42-47). They realized that this was the pattern of the local church. If this organization was to reflect the fellowship of local churches, then it must include these emphases in its direction.

Why should a church consider fellowship in the NTAIBC?

First, the climate of the day demands such a relationship. The sterility of modernism has been unmasked. Its pseudo-intellectualizing of the Word of God has led it to the barren plains of materialism in thought and deed. The duplicity of neo-orthodoxy has been unveiled. Its attempt to soften the harshness of modernism in terminological usage as well as its attempt to make the social gospel, once rejected, again palatable, has failed.

Second, the instability of the new evangelicalism has been manifested. Once built upon a protest to adulterated religion, it has now seceded from the battle. The smell of the battle has been overpowered by the perfumes of assent to ecclesiastical relationship once spurned. They may remember the stimulus of hand-to-hand combat once, but now the new evangelicals can no longer find the strength to rise from their bed of ecclesiastical infirmity. Yet the battle has not ceased. It has increased on all sides.

Another problem has arisen. Third, the isolation of the fundamentalist into pockets of resistance unrelated to each other has developed. During the battles with

modernism and the new evangelicalism within denominational and associational boundaries, the great truth of the independence of the local church became the banner under which the fundamentalists stood shoulder to shoulder.

Denominations sought to dispossess local assemblies from their properties. Other groups infiltrated the local churches to eventually take over and tranquilize a once militant people. The vision of the importance of the purity of the church was lost. The church became only a part of the larger group – the association lost its concept of the primacy of those local churches with the consent of the churches themselves.

Fellowship changed, denominations deteriorated, but the local church concept stood nevertheless. Pastors discovered that the sheep had been oriented to a program. Thus when the call came to under gird the local church concept, the sheep became obstinate and refused to separate from this growing and enveloping inclusivism. I can recall a family that came to the church where I served. They loved every part of the church life. However, they could not identify with the missionary outreach because they had been involved with another missionary fellowship. For this reason they left the church because of the programmed loyalty. Pastors were maligned by officials and suffered much heartache as they saw the barriers of autonomy broken down. Lay people were torn between allegiance to pastoral leadership or allegiance to the larger association and missionary program.

When the local position was under girded and separation became the voice of the people and pastor from denominational ties, the pastor and people rejoiced in the free air of independency. If fellowship was to be maintained, the pastor would fellowship with pastors of like kind. The local church became isolated to itself in many cases. Camps, youth meetings, recreational activities were scheduled with other “free” churches. The church individually did not sense any reason for cooperation beyond this auxiliary level. All enjoyed the sunshine of this freedom after the darkness and gloom of ecclesiastical conflict.

However, problems became evident. The individual member could not be so easily isolated. He was subject to intense assessments of the “outsiders.” The materialism of the day drew him to the market place, the school, and the community. He had an answer – Christ. He saw the crowds follow the ecumenical accents in evangelism and cooperation. He stood out as an obscurantist in the midst of the ecumenical flood. He had the answer – separation unto Christ. Could not this high and holy position be augmented by the voice of others? We believe that the NTAIBC relationships are the answer to the independent Baptist church in the midst of a day of great confusion and pressure.

The Holy Spirit provided the cohesive for the early churches. Yet God deigned to use one man – Paul, as the cohesive in fellowship and position. His testimony of involvement (II Corinthians 11:16-33) included the phrase of responsibility “. . . *the care of all the churches* . . .” (II Corinthians 11:28). This was a daily concern of the man of God.

Can that concern be transferred to others? Only those related are usually concerned. No one will ever minister to churches as Paul did. However, a tie was formed between churches. When churches unite for mutual purposes and fellowship they are bound together in brotherly love and concern. We have seen such

fellowships destroyed in the striving for power and position. The pastors of the NTAIBC are fully aware of these potential problems. Yet there is a need for this kind of fellowship.

Why should a church become associated with the NTAIBC?

First, it is a voice uninhibited by denominational pressures for loyalty. The NTAIBC is a fellowship of churches. It is a testimony to the unity of diversity. Its stress is to loyalty to Christ and the local churches.

Second, it is a voice uninhibited by divisive ecumenism. A local church may ignore ecumenism except to identify it. Yet the members of the local churches feel the pressure of the ecumenical tide every day. An association of churches is a testimony against ecumenism. It must be. It is an island of security and a collective witness nationally against the flood of ecumenical persuasiveness.

Third, it is a voice unhampered by deteriorating materialism. Who can fight over fellowship? The churches of the NTAIBC are not bound together by vested interests, mission agencies, or school. Division in former relationships became evident over the struggle to control institutions. NTAIBC is not an endorsing agent for any institution.

Fourth, it is a voice unchanged by destructive socialism. The American people since 1932 have depended on centralized government for the answer to local problems. These churches do not exist because of NTAIBC. It exists because the churches

have sensed a need for fellowship and service together. NTAIBC must remain apart from the problems of the local church. The solution of such problems rests with the leadership and membership of each local church. NTAIBC is only a fellowship in service.

Fifth, it is a voice unlimited by divisive isolationism. The book of Acts is the revelation of the happy cooperation and concern of companion churches. The Macedonian church gave aid to the needy saints (II Corinthians 8:1-4).

Each church is enhanced by each member (I Corinthians 12). In an association, each church is enhanced by each sister church. We become the target of concern of like churches. An athlete moves toward his goal. He is stimulated by his teammates and by those who applaud. Our concern for each other stimulates us to greater activity.

The NTAIBC asks a church to declare in its assembly its desire by vote to become affiliated. Such a declaration is looked upon by some as a reservoir of future problems. We ask individuals to declare their faith publicly before they become members of the local church. They may become problems later. NTAIBC churches will never suffer the problems because of severance from the association. The relationship is terminated by mutual consent.

Can a church stand alone? Yes! Can a church stand more effectively by itself before the pressures of an ecumenical world? We believe it will become increasingly difficult for such a church.

We have a unified voice to sound before this world. The individual church is commissioned by the Lord to evangelize and to edify each member. The larger association honors both of these purposes in the local churches. However, a true association cannot seek to subvert the local ties of the members of each church for its