

CHANGES IN DIVINE POLICY

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Whenever God changes His dealings with His people, He authenticates it with supernatural signs and wonders that prove beyond a doubt that He is speaking through the servants He chose to work with. When He sent Moses to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land, He gave him three initial signs. (Exodus 4:1-9) This was reinforced with the plagues on Egypt and even continued throughout the wilderness journey. Likewise, the testimony of the Old Testament prophets was authenticated by miracles. When the prophesied Messiah came, He performed enough miracles that the whole world could scarce contain the record of them. (John 21:25) When God set aside Judaism for Christianity, He substantiated it with multitudinous miracles at the hands of the Apostles and prophets. When God changes His dealings with man, He is careful to be fair and prove that it is indeed Himself, rather than some misdirected person that is speaking. And so it will be with the tribulation prophets (Rev 11:5,6) and the future coming of the Son of Man as the lightening that illuminates the whole sky. (Mat 24:26,27)

The Church was formed by the Holy Spirit's baptism of the followers of Christ into one body of believers on the Day of Pentecost. But in the Church's recovery from the Dark Ages of Roman Catholicism, the practical unity of the body virtually disappeared. Reformation Christianity was polarized into multitudinous competing denominations. The "Brethren" awakening of about 1830 was an attempt to rise above the divided state of denominationalism by meeting on the Scriptural grounds of the one body of the New Testament church.

But the "Brethren" movement was not authenticated by visible miracles. It didn't need to be. God changed nothing! He didn't speak oracularly, and He didn't set up anything new. He simply revived the truths He had previously authenticated in the day of the Apostles. His Spirit impressed godly men with truths that had largely fallen by the wayside because of the unfaithfulness of His people. They acted on these truths because they found them in the Word of God. Nor did they initially claim to be setting up anything at all. The Holy Spirit pointed out certain truths and a small part of the already existing body of Christ acted on them.

The early "Brethren" considered themselves nothing but Christians obediently gathered to the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ, welcoming all godly Christians as fellow members of the body of Christ. As such, they were gathered on the Scriptural grounds of the church of Christ rather than the sectarian grounds of the various denominations. But over the years, many "Brethren" have come to perceive themselves as gathered apart from the rest of the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit in some sort of official ecclesiastical capacity. Their "Of Christ" assumption that God has established them as His official fellowship of Assemblies has dragged them back to the sectarian ground that the "Brethren" originally forsook. They no longer practically recognize the assembly of the Scriptures, which is the whole body of Christ (Col 1:18), that has existed ever since Pentecost.

Apparently more and more brethren are becoming concerned with the sectarian degeneration within "Brethren" movement. It seems that the Spirit of God may again be reviving the lines of truth that were once recovered in the movement. God grant those who are apprehending the authentic ground of gathering to act on the Scriptural grounds of the entire body of Christ that God still owns. He has never authenticated any change in His dealings with the church.