

The Wednesday Word, July 11, 2018: I Am a Member of Christ

"For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Ephesians 5:30

A dear friend of mine, when he was young, was approached by a gang of teenagers demanding to know whether he was Protestant or Catholic. Perhaps I should give you some background. This happened at the beginning of the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland when tensions between Roman Catholics and Protestants were raging high. I also should mention that my friend was a very dark-skinned young man from India. He smiled at his antagonists and said, "Lads, I am a Hindu." The leader of the gang then sternly looked him up and down and said, "Yes, but are you a Protestant Hindu or a Catholic Hindu?"

Many times, I also have been asked what I am. In other words, what camp do I belong to spiritually?

That's easy to answer.

I am Catholic. The word 'Catholic' means "universal." I am not, however, Roman Catholic. I am not under the authority of the man who falsely claims to be the head of the 'True Church'. He is not the Vicar of Christ and I give heed neither to him nor to his imagined infallibility. The truth is, all Believers are Catholic. We are discovered right across the world (Colossians 1:6). We are those who trust in Christ alone for salvation. Simply put, We are members of Christ!

I am Baptist. Basically, a "Baptist" is one who baptizes or has been baptized by immersion. In this sense, I am Baptist. However, I am a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and like all true Baptists put no confidence for salvation in having been baptized, albeit by immersion. Our trust is in Christ Alone!

I am a member of Christ!

I am Presbyterian. Presbyterians believe in leadership by a body of leaders. Paul appointed such qualified elders in the various groups of Christians he worked with (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). In this sense, I am "Presbyterian," I believe in elders but I am not a devotee of any particular Presbyterian denomination.

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I am a Congregationalist. This term, Congregational, indicates the independence of a Christian assembly in a given locality. Congregationalists hold that there is no such thing as a central government that presides over many churches. The New Testament communities practiced autonomy (Acts 20:17,28). In other words, each assembly was responsible for its own affairs. In this sense, I am a "Congregationalist," but I am not a member of The Congregational Church. I am a member of Christ!

I am an Adventist. This term signifies one who is looking for, expecting and waiting for Christ's second coming. (Philippians 3:20; 1 Thessalonians 1:10). I am an "Adventist" in this sense, but I am not a member of The Seventh Day or any Adventist Church.

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I am Brethren. Jesus said to His followers, “You are all brothers” (Matthew 23:8). I am one of the brothers (brethren), but not a member of any Brethren Assembly whether Closed or Open. I am a member of Christ.

I am Pentecostal. Around AD 30, on the Feast of Pentecost, the Spirit was given in His fullness (Acts 2:1,4,16-17,33,38-39). The Spirit came with the chief purpose of magnifying and exalting the Lord Jesus. I fully endorse and adhere to this pre-eminent work of the Spirit. In this sense, I am “Pentecostal,” but I’m not a member of any Pentecostal Church. I am a member of Christ!

As believers, we are first and foremost members of Christ. Every blood washed, saved person is a member of Christ. That does not mean we are independent of each other. No indeed! Every believer will want, if able, to join with other like-minded believers to worship, receive the bread and wine and to be instructed in the Word. Although we are members of various kinds of churches, believers are first and foremost Christians (Acts 11:26). We are members of Christ.

And that’s the Gospel Truth!