

The Church of God Is Not a Franchise

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By Dennis Mouland

DEWEY, Ariz.—We're all familiar with food businesses that are franchised. Whether it be McDonald's, Denny's or Hawaiian Shaved Ice snow cones, food products have been franchised as a way to expand and maintain levels of product satisfaction.

When a small-business owner buys a franchise, he signs a strict contract that requires him to serve only his master's products and bans them from any modification, addition or subtraction from the line of products approved. Appearance, advertisement, speed of service and exact contents are closely controlled.

Denny's and a COG

I know of a Denny's in Phoenix for which the owner did not maintain the appearance of the facility. He was sternly warned and then his franchise revoked within weeks of his refusal to comply. Within two hours of his removal, the Denny's HQ had contractors on site doing major repairs.

Franchises control everything, and they have little room for any second-rate operations.

Recently, a large corporate Church of God offshoot sponsored a 50-year-anniversary celebration of the Church of God in a Western city. They wanted you to come whether you were a member of that group or not. Even those who had completely left the Church of God tradition were welcomed. I applaud their effort in this regard.

I was privy to some of the planning E-mails. There was quite a bit of discussion and concern over what the organizers were calling the "disenfranchised members."

The tone and the nerve

The tone and the attitude seemed to imply that those of us not in their group were second-class members at best. I have felt that attitude at almost every occasion to meet someone from that group.

I know that the planners in no way wanted to insult outsiders, but the fact that they early on discussed such a group was telling.

Some people attended the gathering just for the reconnecting of old social ties. Others went out of curiosity. Some attended just to see who had survived.

I did not attend because I felt I had already been separated and identified by them through this and other actions as something other than a full-fledged member of the Church of God.

Refusing to anoint

I happen to know of two circumstances during this past Feast (2011) where ministers of this same large group refused to anoint people because they were not members of their group. You see, you cannot even consider the possibility of equality of the no-franchise merchandise.

At the independent Feast site I attended, I met an elder from that same large church who knew he would be removed from the speaking schedule, if not from the church, because he attended a nonfranchised Feast site. Were he to dare to speak, publicly pray or otherwise serve at our second-rate Feast site, he would be removed from the ministry: no longer a franchisee.

You see, no matter how they try to clothe it, they still consider you and me second-class Christians at best.

This is sad but telling that the fear of the so-called government of God on earth (i.e., the ministry) is watching over its franchise. Franchisers generally turn their backs on unapproved products, sometimes even forbidding communication and fellowship.

Protecting the franchise

So I got to thinking about the term and attitude embraced by calling us the disenfranchised members. Then it struck me: I am a disenfranchised member and do not ever want to be trapped in one of those franchise churches again.

That is, in essence, the problem. The franchise will always fight to protect itself, its image, its ways and especially its resources.

The franchised-church members are often under tight contracts with their masters (not with God) as to their priorities, desires to join brethren of other franchises and just how to live. The franchise contract forbids most things and especially the consideration of the perceived outsiders as a real part of the true church.

One true churches sort the brethren

This is sad, but it's predicted in 3 John 1:9-10 and other places in Scripture. We are surrounded by a barrage of franchised Churches of God, all of them the "only true church," all of which cannot comprehend the choices we independents made never to be under the tight control of a franchise master.

From Oklahoma to Britain to Texas to Ohio, the franchises rule over their contracted slaves, forbidding at times even basic human kindnesses and family values.

Shame on every one of you! As you work so hard to protect your part of the pie, you run over the rest of the church.

The so-called only true churches have spent as much time sorting the brethren as they have preaching the gospel. As they weigh, rate and calculate the church, they simply prove how anxious they are to merchandise the brethren (2 Peter 2:3).

Lip service to unity

As I close, I think I will go into a Coke store with a Pepsi in my hand. I'll see how long I last. Purity of the supreme only-true franchise must be maintained. We outsider heathens are second-rate.

Please don't talk about unity until you are willing to quit disobeying the first two Commandments and until you sincerely apologize to the disenfranchised church. We are out here and we are doing quite well without your brand of control or your endorsement.

We thank God because He has been so kind to all of us to be part of His church. Thankfully, whether you acknowledge us as full members of the church of the Great God is irrelevant to Him and us.