

SOUTHERN FRIED CHURCHES

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My husband says that a Presbyterian, which he grew up as, is a cold, intellectual, well-read Baptist. On the other hand, a Baptist is a warm-hearted, ignorant Presbyterian. I can say this because I am one--a Baptist, that is.

Two of the more interesting phenomena seen in Southern culture are the naming and the splitting of Protestant churches, especially Baptist churches. Don't ever attend a church business meeting where they are building or renovating a Baptist church.

Verbal battles are fought over many matters, from crucial theological and doctrinal differences of opinion to sometimes stunningly trivial things like which choir robe to buy, what color the new carpet in the sanctuary should be, what roofing material will best suit Southern weather variations, or even what to name the church.

Sometimes folks get so ticked off about decisions that have been made that they go off and start their own church, which I guess is the equivalent of eating worms.

For example, in the town just across the Red River from here there is an Evening Star Baptist Church and a Second Evening Star Baptist Church. There are also the New Light, First New Light, Second New Light, Great Light, Starlight, Midnight Star and Sunlight Missionary Baptist Churches.

Occupy #1 Baptist Church was evidently founded by some Old Testament scholars (God told the Israelites to go out and occupy the land). Occupy #2 was started when somebody got mad about something and left.

I have a friend who belongs to the Second Evergreen Baptist Church, which came from--you guessed right--the First Evergreen Baptist Church. There are also the Third Evergreen Baptist Church and the Greater Third Evergreen Baptist Church.

God told the people to go out and multiply, and some apparently thought He meant they were to have a Baptist church on every corner. There is one group of churches I'm watching right now to see what they come up with next. First came Missionary Baptist Church. Fight ... Hope Missionary Baptist Church. Fight ... New Hope Missionary Baptist

Church. Fight ... Voila! Greater New Hope Missionary Baptist Church. I'll let you know what's next.

I've come across some interesting church names in recent years, including Latter Rain Pentecostal and Eastern Charm Baptist Churches (Alexandria LA), Koran Baptist Church (Haughton LA), St. James Baptist Church (Natchitoches LA) and Soda Baptist Church in, of all places, Soda TX.

It's off the subject, but that reminds me of the little Texas burg a Yankee got stranded in. He asked the first person he saw, "Say, you!" (Yankees can be rude.) "What's the name of this place?"

"It ain't got a name, but Dump's as good as any."

The last time I looked, there really was a Dump TX.

In Dallas I gawked at the First Pentecostal Church of God in Christ Incorporated sign and wondered how to say it all in one breath.

My friend, Bro. Bennie Hollingsworth's imaginary church tickled my fancy: Gerber Baptist--for baby Christians.

Just a whoop and a holler from here in Tioga LA, the Alpine First Baptist Church used to be called Sardis Baptist until somebody read in the Book of Revelation that Sardis is a dead church.

Now before you get ticked off, remember, I'm a Baptist!