

## THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS DIFFERENT

By Bill J. Humble

### I. Introduction

- A. One of the leading speech educators of the United States summarized his attitude toward the church by saying, "The church of Christ is just different." Let us be thankful that this is true!
- B. Thesis. A truth: the church of Christ is different.  
A reason: why the New Testament church is different.  
A plea: let's keep the church different.

### II. Body.

- A. A Truth: the church of Christ is different.  
 (Develop this truth by dividing the religious world into great segments and contrasting the church with each.)
1. From paganism--by its faith in one God. Paganism is hardly a problem to us today, but it was a problem in the first century, and it will be now when the gospel goes "into all the world." The answer to paganism: the unknown God. Acts 17.
  2. From Judaism--by its faith in Christ as the Son of God.
    - a. Why did the Jews reject Christ? They misunderstood their own religion, its purpose and its prophecies. Jno. 5:39,46; Acts 8:35.
    - b. A Jew's explanation of the trial of Jesus: he was a politician who was threatening the position of the ruling Saducees.
  3. From Roman Catholicism--by its faith in the sufficiency of Christ.
    - a. Christ is sufficient as head of his church. Eph. 1:22,23.
    - b. His word is sufficient as our only rule of faith and practice. Contrast the statement of Cardinal Gibbons with " Tim. 3:16,17.
  4. From Protestant denominationalism--by its faith in the authority of Christ. 2 Tim. 3:16,17 asserts three great propositions relative to scripture: inspiration, authority and sufficiency. A century ago our battle with Protestantism centered in the authority of the New Testament, but now it centers in inspiration.
  5. From the irreligious--by its faith in the life of Christ. Gal. 2:20; I Pet. 2:21,22.
- B. A Reason: why the New Testament church is different.
1. God has a pattern for the church.
    - a. God has always had a pattern for his great institutions.
      - (1) Tabernacle. Ex. 25:9,40.
      - (2) Temple. 1 Chron. 28:9-11,19.
      - (3) Church. Heb. 8:4,5.

- b. Every warning and rebuke of the New Testament indicates that God has a pattern. 1 Cor. 11:27. "Where there is no order, there can be no disorder," A. Campbell.
2. We have a duty. We must judge every item of faith, every practice, by God's pattern. Brethren may disagree as to what the pattern shows, but all agree that there is a pattern. The only exceptions are the few modernists who have already departed from the faith.
    - a. This is why we are concerned about questions which seem "silly and childish" to the average denominationalist: the action of baptism, the purpose of baptism, instrumental music, independence of the local congregation.
    - b. Illustration: if a contractor added a steeple, cross and organ to a new building, the brethren would not accept it. Why not? He did not build according to the blueprint.
  3. This conviction that God has a pattern is the foundation upon which the restoration ideal rests. If the New Testament is not a blueprint for the church, the restoration plea is a hollow empty mockery.
    - a. Thomas Campbell in Declaration And Address; A. Campbell in Christian Baptist articles.
    - b. As the Christian Church has become modernistic, it has slowly surrendered this view of the New Testament. (Garrison and DeGroot, p. 21,22)
  4. We must know what the blueprint teaches. Thus, study, investigation and controversy are a necessary part of New Testament Christianity. When I first learned that such discussions are a necessary part of following the pattern. If they are conducted in the right spirit and for the right purpose, they are a sign of spiritual strength. But if we ever say, "It makes no difference what we do or how we do it," we must admit that modernism has stolen our distinctive faith!

C. A Plea: let's keep the church different.

1. Our preaching must be distinctive. Jude 3 Illustration: J. D. Tant's sermon on "the subject I cannot mention" at a union service.
2. Our practices must be scriptural, not denominational. Special Christmas services, election of elders, and making the church a recreational organization, are examples.
3. Our faith must be unmarred by modernism.
4. Our plea must be a restoration of New Testament Christianity.

III. Conclusion.

God has a pattern, and we must follow it. If modernism ever robs us

of this conviction, the battle is lost and our faith in the deity of Christ and other fundamentals cannot long survive.

If God has a pattern, we must speak where the Bible speaks, be silent where it is silent.

If the New Testament is not a pattern, then we must admit that it matters little what we speak or whether we speak at all.