

WHY THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS NOT A DENOMINATION

Donald Townsley

INTRODUCTION

1. Jesus said "*Upon this rock I will build my church*" -- Matt. 16:18.
 - (1) The word "my" is defined "of or belonging to me".
 - (2) Jesus was saying the church He would build would belong to Him.
2. All students of the New Testament will have to admit they never read about a denomination in the New Testament.
3. The reason being, denominations came into existence since the close of the New Testament Period and without the authority of God.
4. Jesus did not promise to build a denomination, therefore:
 - (1) All denominations exist without the authority of Christ.
 - (2) No denomination that exists today is the church of Christ.
 - (3) The church of Christ, or the church that Jesus built, is not a denomination.
5. Since the church that Jesus built is NOT a denomination, all loyal members of Christ's church are opposed to denominationalism.
6. The Bible tells us all about the church that Jesus built; one cannot become a member of it without following the Bible.
7. Let us give attention to some very definite reasons why the church of Christ is NOT a denomination.

I. IT DOES NOT HAVE A DENOMINATIONAL HEAD

1. Christ is the Head of His Church -- Eph. 1: 22 - 23; Col. 1:18.
2. He is the ONLY Head.
 - (1) No man, nor group of men upon this earth, have the right to legislate for the Lord's church.
 - (2) All Authority RESTS with Him -- Matt. 28:18.
 - (3) He will never die out of office -- Rev. 1: 18; Rom. 6: 9; Heb. 7: 24 - 25.
 - (4) He reigns in heaven over His kingdom -- Col. 3:1.
 - (5) His reign will continue till the end of the world -- I Cor. 15:24; Matt. 28:20.
 - (6) Any man, or group of men, who attempt to legislate for the church become the "man of sin" -- 2 Thess. 2:4 - 5.
3. Sometimes the question is asked, "Doesn't the church of Christ have headquarters somewhere?"
 - (1) What prompts this question?
 - (2) Denominations have their headquarters on earth with legislative, judicial, and executive authority vested in some man or group of men.
 - (3) The headquarters of the church of Christ is in heaven.

II. THE CHURCH OF CHRIST DOES NOT HAVE A DENOMINATIONAL ORGANIZATION

1. Modern denominations are highly organized.
 - (1) Each congregation is tied to all other congregations in that denomination by a man-made organization.
 - (2) We read of the activities of conferences, councils, and conventions.

2. The church of Christ knows no such organization.
3. Its organization is fashioned after the New Testament pattern.
 - (1) Each congregation is a UNIT within itself.
 - (2) No two congregations are tied together by a human organization.
 - (3) The only offices known to this organization are -- elders and deacons -- Phil. 1:1; I Tim. 3.
 1. They are local offices.
 2. No brotherhood elderships.
 - (4) Each congregation has its own elders and deacons -- Acts 14: 23; Tit. 1:5.
 - (5) No elder, nor deacon, can function with authority in more than one congregation -- Acts 20:28; I Pet. 5: 2 - 3.

III. THE CHURCH OF CHRIST DOES NOT HAVE A DENOMINATIONAL NAME

1. The church of Christ accepts only such names as are found in the New Testament applied to the church -- Matt. 16:18; Rom. 16:16; Acts 2:47; Acts 20:28; I Cor. 1:1 - 2.
2. Individual members of the church wear only the name "CHRISTIAN" -- I Pet. 4:16; Acts 11:26; Acts 26:28.

IV. THE CHURCH OF CHRIST DOES NOT HOLD TO A DENOMINATIONAL DOCTRINE -- 2 John 9

1. People who are members of it did not "join" it -- they were "added" to it -- Acts 2:47.
2. Members of denominations have been led to think they entered into Christ by doing one thing, and later joined a denomination by a different procedure.
3. The New Testament teaches that one who becomes a Christian enters into Christ and is added to the church by the same thing-- OBEYING THE GOSPEL -- Rom. 1: 16; Rom. 6:3; I Cor. 12:13.

V. THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS NOT DENOMINATIONAL IN ITS WORK AND WORSHIP

1. Denominations work through human societies and organizations.
2. They have introduced into the worship things for which there is no authority in the Bible.
3. Some of the word denominations do:
 - (1) They manage political affairs.
 - (2) They provide recreation.
 - (3) They run businesses.
 - (4) They establish, maintain, or control secular institutions.
4. The church of Christ adheres strictly to the Bible in its plan of work and worship.
 - (1) All work is done through the local church.
 - (2) No missionary societies nor charitable institutions are employed.
 - (3) Nothing is used as an item of worship in the church of Christ which is not commanded by Christ and His Apostles.

CONCLUSION:

1. Followers of Christ in New Testament times were not denominationalists.
2. If we reproduce the exact pattern of the church they were members of, how can we be members of a denomination??