



FROM TRUTH IN LOVE • APRIL, 1940

Why The Church Of Christ Is Not A Denomination

By JOHN D. COX

Jesus said "Upon this rock I will build my church." (Matt. 16:18.) The word "my" is defined by Webster as: "of or belonging to me." When Christ said, "I will build my church," of course, he meant that the church he would build was to be of himself and was to belong to him. So, we read in the New Testament of "the church of the Lord" (Acts 20:28); "the church of God" (1 Cor. 1:2); "the church" (Eph. 1:22.) It is noticeable to the student of the New Testament that we never read of different denominations as branches of the church. Denominations have come into existence since the close of the New Testament period and without the authority of God. This thought may be impressed upon our minds by simply asking the question: "Which denomination did Jesus have in mind when he said, 'upon this rock I will build my church?'" Of course, the answer is that he had no denomination in mind. That being true, Jesus did not promise to build a denomination or denominations. From this thought we gather three important lessons. 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, or "the church of the Lord;" (3) the church of Christ,

or the church that Jesus built, is not a denomination.

Since the church that Jesus built is not a denomination, all loyal members of the Lord's church are opposed to denominationalism. By dying for but one church, Jesus demonstrated his desire for unity among his followers. (Acts 20:28; John 17:21.) Denominationalism destroys unity among those who would follow Christ. One cannot consistently claim to be a member of the church of Christ and a denomination at the same time. The success of one means the failure of the other.

Honest hearts will inquire: "How may I become a member of the Lord's church and not join a denomination?" The answer: Go to the book that tells all about the church that is of Christ and nothing about denominationalism. Go to the Bible! One who takes the Bible as his only rule of faith and practice is sure to learn all there is to know about the Lord's church. He will be certain to learn but one thing about denominationalism and that is, that it is wrong. Since the Bible tells nothing of modern denominations, one cannot become a member of a denomination by following the Bible. Since the Bible tell all about the church that Jesus built, one cannot become a member of it without following the Bible. If one cannot join a denomination by following the Bible, and can-

not become a member of the church of Christ without following the Bible, surely the church of Christ is not a denomination!

Let us give attention to some very definite reasons why the church of Christ is not a denomination:

(1) **It does not have a denominational head.** Christ is the head of the church. (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23.) He is the only head of the church. No man, nor group of men, upon this earth have the right to legislate for the Lord's church. All authority rests with him. (Matt. 28:19.) Sometimes the question is asked of members of the church of Christ: "Doesn't the church of Christ have headquarters somewhere?" What prompts this question? Is it not the fact that the various denomination have their headquarters on earth with legislative, judicial, and executive authority vested in some man, or group of men? The headquarters of the church Christ is in Heaven. Christ is the head and his throne is headquarters.

(2) **It does not have a denominational organization.** This follows what we have just been saying. Modern denominations are highly organized. Each congregation is tied to all other congregations in that denomination by a man-made machine or organization. Therefore, we read of activities of conferences, councils, conventions, etc. The church of Christ knows no such

organization. Its organization is fashioned after the New Testament pattern. Each congregation is a unit within itself. No two congregations are tied together by human organization. The only officers known to it are elders and deacons. (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Tim. 3; Phil. 1:1.) Each congregation has its own elders and deacons. No elder, nor deacon, can function with authority in more than one congregation at a time. The only way the various local congregations of the church of Christ are tied together is simply and only as they are related to Christ.

(3) **It does not have a denominational name.** The church of Christ accepts only such names as are found in the New Testament applied to the church. (Acts 20:28; Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 1:1; Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23.) Individual members of the church wear only the name "Christian." The name in which Peter said we should glorify God (1 Pet. 4:16); the name that was worn by the disciples in New Testament times (Acts 11:26);

the name that Paul tried to persuade Agrippa to wear. (Acts 26:28.)

(4) **It does not hold to a denominational doctrine.** People who are members of the church of Christ did not join it. They were "added to" it by the Lord when they obeyed the gospel of Christ (Acts 2:47.) Members of denominations have been led to think that they entered into Christ by doing one thing and later joined a denomination by a different procedure. The New Testament clearly shows that all who are in Christ are in his church, and that all the saved are in the church. The same thing that makes one a child of God also causes that one to be added to the church of the Lord. Those who obey the gospel are saved. (Rom. 1:16.) The saved are added to the church. (Acts 2:47.)

(5) **It is not denominational in its work and worship.** Denominations work through human societies and other organizations. They have introduced into the worship things for which there is

not authority in the Bible. The church of Christ adheres strictly to the Bible in its plan for work and worship. All work, such as preaching the gospel and works of benevolence, is done in the name of Christ (Col. 3:17) and through the church. (Eph. 3:21.) This means that Christ is authority for what is done and that God is glorified in the church. No missionary societies nor charitable institutions, with their glory-taking, fee-grabbing ways, are employed. Nothing is used as an item of worship in the church of Christ which is not commanded by Christ and his apostles. The worship of the church was not designed to entertain, but to edify. Therefore, only such items as are authorized in the New Testament are accepted.

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



GOSPEL MEETING

MAY 7-12

H. E. PHILLIPS

FULTONDALE
CHURCH OF CHRIST

Keeping The Heart With Diligence

By H. E. PHILLIPS

The Holy Spirit said, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). This is a vital charge to every man and woman of responsibility who walks the path of life, and who must come before the judgment bar of God. No greater charge has been given to humanity.

The heart is that part of man from which flows his course of life. W.E. Vine describes the use of this word in the Bible as meaning man's entire mental and moral activity, "both the rational and the emotional elements." The heart includes the intellect, emotion and volition of man. The functions of the heart, as described by the word of God, include: the understanding, the perceptions, the determinations, the reasoning, the desires, joys, sorrows, and griefs, the thoughts, intentions and purposes, and the conscience.

The "issues of life" indicate all elements of life: the thoughts, words and deeds. The heart is the center of man's life, and his life will show the state of his heart. Jesus said, "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things" (Matthew 12:35).

Jesus gave a parable, recorded in Matthew 13 and Luke 8, that presented the state of the heart as the soils into which the seed, which is the word of God, was sown. Jesus depicted these soils as different conditions of the heart to which the word of God was preached. The only soil that produced the acceptable harvest in the sight of the Master was that "honest and

good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15). But who makes that heart honest and good? The word of God produces acceptable obedience only in the honest and good heart. The person himself makes the heart honest and good, or deceitful and evil. Jesus taught that when he said: "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man; but to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man" (Matt. 15:18-20).

The gospel of Christ is addressed to the heart of man, not to his belly or social needs. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17). Man is changed from the inside—from his heart. That is why the social gospel has failed to convert man to serve the Lord; it appeals to the appetites and not to the heart of man.

Salvation from sins does not occur until man turns from his sins and to the Lord. This is accomplished by repentance, which necessitates faith. Faith comes by hearing the word of God, and from no other source (Romans 10:17). Genuine faith produces repentance which results in the cessation from sin and the reformation of life. All comes from the heart. If the heart is not **honest and good**, faith and repentance will not follow. "That if thou shalt confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him

from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9, 10).

The gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16), is addressed to the heart to produce faith (10:17), and obedience comes from the heart (6:17). Unless the heart is honest and good, it will not receive the gospel by which that person can be saved. This makes the man responsible for the integrity of his heart.

This thought is further emphasized by the teaching of Jesus regarding an evil heart. He said one commits adultery in his heart by looking on a woman to lust after her (Matthew 5:28). That is sin, yet it is only in the heart. Jesus describes the heart condition of the scribes and Pharisees and many who followed them as "This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (Matthew 13:15). By refusing to hear and see and understand with their heart, they could not be converted that Jesus might heal them. These were responsible for the condition of their hearts, and their salvation depended upon how their hearts received the truth which Jesus taught. This same lesson is taught in Acts 28:27).

Simon the sorcerer was a deceiver and bewitched many people in Samaria. But when he heard the gospel preached by Philip he believed also and was baptized. He continued with Phil-

ip, observing the miracles which he did, but when Peter and John came down and imparted spiritual gifts unto them, Simon saw this and offered them money for this gift. Peter said to Simon: "Thy money perish with thee, because thou has thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in a gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity" (Acts 8:20-23). Simon asked Peter to pray for him that "none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me" (vs. 24). Even if one's heart is right to receive the word to be saved, he must guard his heart lest it become "not right in the sight of God." The Holy Spirit said, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you and evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Hebrews 3:12).

When the heart will allow it, Satan will enter and lead one into all kinds of evil, in thought, word and deed. Satan entered the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus (John 13:2). Ananias with his wife Sapphira lied about the gift to the work of the Lord. Peter asked, "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back a part of the price?" (Acts 5:3). Satan enters the heart and fills it to do evil. The question by Peter

My good friend and brother, Lowell Blasingame, recently sent me a copy of *Truth in Love* (April, 1940), which he found over in Mississippi while plundering around in the attic of a church building. Besides the good articles, there were several things of interest. The paper was "published monthly at Birmingham, Ala.", with four editors: John D. Cox, Jack Meyer, Gardner S. Hall and Gus Nichols.

Now take note of these "Terms Of Subscription": Twenty-five copies .50, fifty copies .70, Seventy-five copies \$1.00, One hundred copies \$1.35, Five hundred copies \$6.50, One thousand copies \$13.00, Single subscription, per year .40.

Sounds like a bargain to me.

There were two meeting announcements in the paper.

One for the Ensley church with brother John T. Lewis that was to be April 14 to 28.

The other one was for the "Lewisburg Church". That is what the Fultondale church was known as back then. Here is the announcement:

"The Lewisburg Church of Christ, one block west of the Nashville highway in the heart of Lewisburg, will carry on the first of two meetings for this year, beginning April 21 and continuing about two weeks. Services dally at 7:30 P. M. John D. Cox, minister of the North Birmingham church, will do the preaching ..."

I wonder when the meeting closed, since it was to go "about two weeks". — EOB

to Ananias indicated that he could know why Satan filled his heart. He had to give consent. Satan can not get into the heart unless the person allows it. That makes him responsible for the condition of his heart in the area of honesty and goodness.

But the Lord "opens" the heart with the power of the gospel. Those on Pentecost were "pricked" in their heart by the "gospel which Peter and the other apostles preached. They were convicted by the gospel which they allowed to enter their hearts. The Lord opened the heart of Lydia by the things which were spoken by Paul, and

she was baptized and her household (Acts 16:14, 15). Without hearing the gospel, the Lord would not have opened her heart. This simply means that Satan "entered" and "filled" the heart by temptations to betray Christ and lie to the Holy Ghost, so the Lord "opened" the heart of Lydia by the leading of the Spirit through the gospel which was preached to her. The hearts had to be ready to receive what was proclaimed to them.

"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23).

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