

Is the Church of Christ a Denomination?

Dub McClish

It is apparent that many members of the church conceive of the church of Christ as merely a denomination. Such statements as “I am a Church of Christ,” “I am a Church of Christ,” and references to “the **other** denominations” are dead giveaways. Well-meaning but ignorant brethren, sometimes refer to me as their “pastor” and even as “Rev. McClish.” *Clergy* and *laity* are in the speech of many saints. The sectarian expression urging people to “pray the ‘sinner’s prayer’ and accept Christ as their personal Savior” (which may include anything from meditation to “Holy Spirit baptism”) is now used by some, including preachers. Many brethren use the unscriptural term, *witnessing*, when describing personal evangelism. The foregoing symptoms demonstrate the impact of denominational influences and/or gross Biblical ignorance.

There seems to be a strong general tendency to refrain from taking a firm position on certain doctrinal and moral issues and to ignore even fatally false positions as minor matters. Several pulpiteers among us now deem themselves wise enough to improve on God’s plan for the church and for man’s salvation. I lament that the avowed shameless aim of some is to lead the church into denominationalism.

New Testament teaching on the church is not only utterly silent concerning any denominational concept of the church, but rather, it is radically opposed to said concept. For example:

- Christ’s way is narrow, with few travelers (Mat. 7:13–14); denominationalism embraces all professed believers in its “broad” view of “the church.”
- The Lord’s way is one (1 Cor. 1:10–13; Eph. 4:4); in man’s concept all religious roads lead to Heaven.
- Christ will save His church because all of the saved are in it (Acts 2:47; Eph. 5:23); men conceive of “church membership” as unnecessary to salvation.

While the New Testament knows nothing of denominational concepts, it explicitly condemns such concepts in principle (Mat. 7:13–14; 15:6–14; John 17:20–23; 1 Cor. 1:10–13; Eph. 4:1–6; et al.). Christ did not build, die for, add people to, promise to save, and is not the head of anything but His church. It is not even a thirty-second cousin to the plethora of man-made denominations that burden the world.

When one hears the Gospel and learns that God, because of the death of Christ, will forgive his sins upon the conditions of repentance, a declared faith in the Christ as God's Son, and baptism for forgiveness of sins, and he does these things, then the Lord adds him to **His church** (Acts 2:37-47), and to no other. If several people thus hear and obey and continue to follow the teaching of the apostles (Acts 2:41-42), are they the Lord's church, or are they a man-made denomination?

Before anyone labels these propositions and conclusions "narrow-minded" or "judgmental," he would do well to try to refute the truth of them. It may be understandable when outsiders misunderstand and disagree with these principles of Truth, but it is perplexing and distressing to see church members who either do not know or do not care about them.

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