

TRUTH

The Right Name

John Isaac Edwards

Among the things right with the church is the right name. When the church is called by the name of Christ, the church is called by the right name.

The Name of the Builder

The builder of the church is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus promised, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). The word "my" is possessive. The church to be built is the church *of* Christ. It is as the Hebrew writer said, "Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we" and "he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house" (Heb. 3:1-6). To give the church a name other than the name of Christ is to dishonor Christ; and for the church to have a different name it would have to have a different builder!

The Name of the Foundation

The church is built upon Christ, the solid rock. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). The Psalmist recorded, "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner" (Ps. 118:22). Peter applied this to Christ in Acts 4:11, and Christ applied it to himself in Matthew 21:42. Isaiah's prophecy, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation" (Isa. 28:16), points to Christ (1 Pet. 2:5-

6). If the church does not wear the name of Christ, then it is built on the wrong foundation!

The Name of the Purchaser

The church is "the purchased possession" (Eph. 1:14), the blood of Christ is the purchase price (Eph. 1:7; 1 Cor. 6:20), and Christ is the purchaser (Eph. 5:2; Tit. 2:14). Paul admonished the Ephesian elders, "to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). To call the church by another name, you would have to have another possession, a different price, and a foreign purchaser!

The Name of the Head

The head of the church is Jesus Christ. In speaking of Christ, Paul penned, "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18). Paul gave Christ the preeminence when he said, "The churches of Christ salute you" (Rom. 16:16). As members of the body of Christ, we give the preeminence to Christ when we wear the name "Christian," which embraces the name of Christ (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16). To call the church by a name other than the name of Christ or for members to not be called "Christians" is to not give Christ the preeminence!

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***"And ye shall
know the truth,
and the truth
shall make
you free"
(John 8:32).***

Vol. XLVI

No. 23

December 5, 2001



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— Subscription Rates —

\$22.00 Per Year

Single Copies — \$2.00 each

Foreign Subscriptions — \$24.00

— Bulk Rates —

\$1.50 per subscription per month

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Subscriptions, renewals and other correspondence should be sent to Truth Magazine, P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42102.

Book orders should be sent to Truth Bookstore, P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42102. Phone: 1-800-428-0121.

Web Address: www.truthmagazine.com

Postmaster: Send change of address to P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42102.

Truth Magazine (ISSN 1538-0793) is published twice a month by Guardian of Truth Foundation, P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42102. Postage paid at Bowling Green, KY and additional mailing offices.

The Right Organization

Stan Cox

When modern churches are compared to the Bible pattern it becomes evident that men have determined God's plan to be insufficient or irrelevant to their modern needs. Evidence of this is seen in humanly devised worship, the emphasis on the social lives of members, and the proliferation of "works" which have their genesis in a place other than Scripture. Such disrespect for God's word is especially evident in denominational departures from the organizational structure of the church, as revealed in the New Testament.

The aforementioned played a great part in the first major apostasy following the establishment of the church. Early on the concepts of local autonomy and local oversight were disregarded, and the end of such disrespect is the current ecclesiastical system found in the Catholic church and many major denominations. Too, the digressions which have impeded the restoration movement in America have as their cause, in part, a dismissal of this same biblical pattern. The missionary societies established in the late 1800s, and the sponsoring church arrangement which is prevalent among institutional churches today, are both departures from the New Testament pattern of organization for the church.

The examples clearly show the tendency of man to substitute his own wisdom for God's. "For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Cor. 1:22-25). Truly God's wisdom is shown in his pattern for organization in the church.

Christ is the Head of the Church

Of first importance in the organizational structure of any group is the question of authority. Who has it? Who is the head? It may be a pope, a prophet, or a synod, but in the Lord's church it is Jesus. Our Lord said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18). He is the builder of it, and therefore its head. "And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Eph. 1:22-23). This fundamental principal points out the fallacy of modern religious thought. In fact, it does matter what you believe, how you worship, and what you do religiously. Men do not have authority to determine their own worship, organization, and work. "And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9). Rather, they are enjoined to humbly submit to the legislation

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Marc W. Gibson

The church is the body of Jesus the Christ, the Son of God (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). Members of this body are “living stones” built up in a “spiritual house, a holy priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:5). Each Christian in a local church is “sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:2). Christ is the head of the church — its King, Judge, and Savior. In the Savior’s hand we are safe from Satan and his many evil devices (John 10:27-28; 1 Pet. 5:8-10). With all these things being true, why would any Christian be embarrassed by the church? Yet, it would appear that some among us today are embarrassed by the church.

The embarrassment that I am speaking of is not the kind that results from observing hypocritical brethren saying one thing and doing another. Nor is it the embarrassment that results from a child of God leaving his Lord to serve the flesh, giving opportunity for those in the world to mock God. One is not embarrassed by the church itself in these circumstances, but by the foolish and sinful actions of unfaithful members of the church.

This article will deal with the embarrassment experienced by some brethren because of certain divine truths about the church and the bold preaching of them. Though the Scriptures provide a pattern of truth by which we may understand the fundamentals of the church, we are tempted to become embarrassed of this truth when faced with the intimidating winds of human doctrines and philosophies. This embarrassment manifests itself in several ways.

Embarrassed That There is Only One Church

One may be embarrassed to identify himself as a member of the one, true church established by Jesus. Our “tolerant” society despises exclusiveness. The pressure upon all of us is to be inclusive, embracing all forms of “Christianity,” if not all religions, as equally valid. In the face of such tension, a Christian who is of “little faith” may feel embarrassed to stand upon the divine truth that there is only “one body” (Eph. 4:4).

Such embarrassment will silence our voices when we should be bold in calling men out of the evils of human denominationalism to simple New Testament Christianity. We will shun our duty to clearly identify specific human organizations and leaders that deceive men and lead them into error. We will be embarrassed when we hear faithful preachers draw a clear contrast between the New Testament church and the errors of denominationalism. When someone asks us what we are religiously, do we mumble nervously, trying to avoid a straightforward answer, or do we confidently state that we

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are Christians only and members of Jesus' church you can read about in the New Testament (cf. 1 Pet. 3:15)?

Embarrassed By How One Becomes a Member of the Church

Preaching the truth concerning the plan of salvation takes boldness. Many today will not accept that the Bible says, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13). Most people in the religious world believe they can be members of God's church without obeying the Lord's command to be "baptized for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). Are we embarrassed to tell others that they will be lost if they do not believe and are not baptized (Mark 16:16)? Do we avoid offering invitations with our sermons so as to not offend visitors? Are we embarrassed to talk with our friends about salvation and the church lest they think we are intolerant or judgmental about the identity of the saved?

Embarrassed By Sound Preaching About the Church

Fewer and fewer preachers among us are boldly preaching the whole counsel of God about the church. There remains a great need in every generation for sound teaching concerning the establishment, organization, and work of the church. How many Christians would be able to tell their neighbors the distinctive differences between the religious denominations of man and the church of Jesus Christ? How many Christians today would just die of embarrassment to have their neighbors hear a gospel preacher proclaim the

gospel truth about the New Testament church, contrasting the old apostolic paths with modern denominational errors?

Paul was not afraid to preach "Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). He was not embarrassed that this involved preaching various aspects of the local church and its work (1 Cor. 5:2; 10:32; 11:18; 12:28; 14:34-35). To preach Christ and not the church is to preach a head without a body. That would truly be an embarrassing sight.

Embarrassed By Using a Scriptural Name For the Church

One symptom of a growing trend of embarrassment is the demand by some brethren to remove the name "Church of Christ" from the sign in front of the building. The problem is not the attempt to identify the group that meets in a particular building, or we would pull up the entire sign and throw it away. Rather, it is that some have become disenchanted with a wide spread use of the biblical designation "church of Christ" (cf. Rom. 16:16), claiming that it has become a denominational and sectarian term. The use of this scriptural term of identification is no more "sectarian" than calling yourself a Christian, or painting "Christians Meet Here" on the sign. When did it become a disadvantage, or a bad thing, to use a legitimate Bible term of identification? Are we embarrassed for someone to ask us what we mean by calling ourselves a "church of Christ"? Shouldn't we be thrilled to give an answer from the pages of Scripture? There are various terms we can legitimately use to identify the people of God today, but is the use of one in particular being discouraged because brethren have become embarrassed or tired of its use? Could this suggest that the opinions of men mean more to us than fearlessly proclaiming "the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11)? Maybe what we *don't* want on a sign says more about us than what we *do* want on a sign. Think on these things.

Conclusion

We should preach the saving gospel with great boldness of speech (2 Cor. 3:12; 1 Thess. 2:2). Our faith and courage are not what they should be if we are embarrassed by the church for which Christ shed his blood (Acts 20:28). Satan seeks to intimidate all of us with the fear of men, but the soldier of Christ must courageously march forward with the banner of truth clearly visible for all to see. If an unbelieving world mocks and opposes us, so be it. My Father in heaven was not embarrassed to send his only begotten Son to die for me — how could I be faithful to that divine love and at the same time be embarrassed by the precious body of his Son, the church of Christ?

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The Right Day of Worship

One question that comes up from time to time is why we worship God on the first day of the week. There are several

religious bodies who hold to the doctrine that says that one must worship God on the seventh day of the week, like Moses did. Not only do we see such groups as the Seventh-Day Adventists promoting such doctrine, but there are also some Baptist people who hold to the same teaching. In truth, it has spread farther than this, and we see Catholics offering “mass” on Saturday night. The Owensboro (Kentucky) Christian Church does a similar thing as well (Source: monthly newsletter). It has not gone unnoticed by me that since I have lived in the Owensboro area, we get several phone calls to the radio program on the days we talk about whether or not we are to worship God on the first or seventh day of the week. For some reason, this hits a nerve with people in this area. If it hits a nerve here, I’m sure it is a subject of discussion in other parts of the country as well.

Significant Days in the History of Men

In this country, we recognize certain days as significant to us. The Fourth of July, for example, means much to us as Americans. Yet, it means nothing to those in Great Britain and other parts of the world. Yes, those in America and England observe a fourth day in the month of July on our respective calendars, but the fourth of July carries no meaning to those in England and in other countries of the world. We could think of similar days in other parts of the world which have significance to the inhabitants in a particular country, yet this same celebration would mean nothing to those of us in the United States.

Similarly, when looking to the Old Testament, we find certain days mentioned which had significance to God’s people, the Jews. While they would mean nothing to Gentiles and the heathen nations, they had a special meaning to those of the Jewish nation. They had various feast days, holy days, and other occasions that stood out in the mind of the Jews (Col. 2:16). Probably, no day stood out more to the Jew than the weekly observance of the Sabbath.

When God gave the Ten Commandments to the people

at Horeb, He said, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exod. 20:8). This day was a day of offering sacrifices and worshipping God. On this day, the Jews were not to work (Exod. 20:10). (Though they could “do well” on the Sabbath, Matt. 12:11-12.) Yet, concerning this law, we find the priests excepted, for they were busy offering the sacrifices on this day, first for themselves and then for the people (Matt. 12:5; Heb. 7:27).

This Sabbath law was made while the Jews were gathered at Horeb and was for that generation of people (Deut. 5:2-3). The reasons for commanding the Sabbath were made clear when God said, “For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it” (Exod. 20:11; 31:17). Also, Moses told the Jews before they entered Canaan to: “Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day” (Deut. 5:15). While some try to say that God has always expected his people to keep the Sabbath, we find *no* record of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph or others of that time period keeping the Sabbath. Yet, we find many references to Sabbath-keeping after the children of Israel heard the voice of God at Horeb.

Even Christ kept the Sabbath. We find our Lord in the synagogue on the Sabbath on various occasions (Mark 6:1-2; Luke 4:16-21). He also kept the feast days (John 5:1; 7:2, 14; Matt. 26:17-18). Our Lord submitted to the Law of Moses in all respects (1 Pet. 2:22). Yet, this did not stop our Lord from teaching and composing a New Covenant that would come into effect after his death (Heb. 9:15-17).

A New Covenant Is Given To Men Today.

Are things the same as they have always been? Some say “yes” and some “no,” but our concern is what the

Bible has to say (1 Pet. 4:11). In fact, we find that there is a new testament, or covenant, which has come into effect since the death of Christ. This is made clear in Hebrews 7:12-14. Our Lord Christ is named “a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 7:21). In order for this to be true, and one from the tribe of Judah named as a priest, it demanded “a change also of the law” (Heb. 7:12). This happened when Christ died and nailed “the handwriting of ordinances” to the cross (Col. 2:14). (While some contend that Christ only nailed sin to the cross, we see that “the handwriting of ordinances” was nailed there as well. See also: Eph. 2:15.) Paul says that the Old Law or Law of Moses was “done away,” “abolished,” and “taken away” (2 Cor. 3:7-16). These words ought to mean something to the Bible student who is striving to serve God and “rightly divide the word of truth.”

Let us also understand that if Christ did away with one covenant, he must also have given us another. The Bible shows consistently that when one thing is taken away, it is replaced with something else. This is true in the personal lives of Christians (Col. 3:5-15), and it is true concerning his people as a whole. An example of what we’re talking about is seen when Christ was getting ready to leave this world. He told the apostles, “I will not leave you comfortless” (John 14:18). He was leaving this world, but was sending “another comforter” (John 14:16) to help the apostles in carrying on their work. The Comforter would come and then guide them into all truth (John 16:7-13). Notice, that while one comforter was leaving, “another comforter” would be sent. In the case of Old and New Covenants, the Old Testament was done away. Therefore, there was to be another, a “new testament,” which would be in effect. This new covenant, or new testament came into effect at the death of Christ (Heb. 9:15-17). It is a testament or covenant that had been promised since the days of Jeremiah (Jer. 31:31-34), and it came into effect after Christ’s death. The Holy Spirit said this was a “better covenant, which was established upon better promises” (Heb. 8:6). This is the covenant under which men today are subjects. Therefore, whatever the New Testament says is what we must heed and obey (Col. 3:17; 1 Pet. 4:11).

Seeing that we are subject to a “better covenant which was established upon better promises” (Heb. 8:6), let us see if anything else has changed.

What Day Is Emphasized in the New Testament?

Seeing that we are now subject to a new law, and not the Old law, what day has been emphasized? Did the apostles emphasize the Sabbath (seventh) day, or another day? It is interesting to note that the term “Lord’s day” is used only once in the entire Bible. This phrase is found in Revelation 1:10 when John said he was in the spirit “on the Lord’s day.” This term is significant because no where in the Bible do we read of this term being used in relation to the Sabbath.

The Sabbath day is always called the Sabbath, and never the Lord’s day. Yet, a day in Revelation 1:10 is termed “the Lord’s day.”

The diligent Bible student will note that, in the New Testament, we read about various things belonging to the Lord: his blood (Matt. 26:28; Luke 22:20; Acts 20:28), “the cup of the Lord” (1 Cor. 10:21; 11:27), “the disciples of the Lord” (Acts 9:1), “the Lord’s table” (1 Cor. 10:21), “the Lord’s death” (1 Cor. 11:26), “the Lord’s body” (1 Cor. 11:29), “the Lord’s supper” (1 Cor. 11:20), and “the Lord’s day” (Rev. 1:10). These phrases and descriptions are exclusive to the New Testament, referring to something which belongs to Christ under the gospel.

Now, we ask the question again, “What day is emphasized in the New Testament?” Is it the Sabbath day? Whatever day it is, it is called “the Lord’s day,” and the Sabbath was never so described. In fact, the Bible declares that the Sabbath day has ended (Hos. 2:11; Col. 2:14-15). Therefore, there must be a new day which has significance to God’s people. What day is this? (1) It is the day on which Christ was resurrected (Mark 16:9). (2) It is the day on which Christ was declared to be “the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness” (Rom. 1:4). (3) It is the day on which Christ met with the apostles before his ascension (John 20:1, 19, 26). (4) It is the day on which all the events concerning Acts 2 and the day of Pentecost occurred (Lev. 23:15). (5) It is the day on which the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles (Acts 2:1-4). (6) It is the day on which the first gospel sermon proclaimed Jesus Christ as Lord (Acts 2:36). (7) It is the day on which people were first added to the church (Acts 2:41). (8) It is the day on which the Lord’s supper was commemorated (Acts 20:7). What day is this? The honest Bible student knows there is only one answer to this question, for there is only one day which fits this criteria. It is the first day of the week, or as John called it, “the Lord’s day.”

The Lord’s Day, Not the Sabbath, Has Significance to Christians

When reading about the practice of the churches of the first century, we see that they did not gather together to worship God on the Sabbath like the Jews did. They assembled (Heb. 10:25; 1 Cor. 11:20a) on the first day of the week in order to worship the Lord. The Jerusalem church is the first example of disciples worshiping God on the first day of the week. As stated above, the Lord added almost 3000 to the church on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41). Then, “They continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). Here, they were engaged in worship to the God of Heaven, after having been added to Christ’s body (Col. 1:18, 24). Yet, this was not incidental to their gathering, for other examples of worshiping on the Lord’s day can be found. The church at Troas met “upon the first

day of the week” in order to worship God. Their worship included partaking of the Lord’s supper and hearing Paul preach (Acts 20:7). The Corinthians and Galatians also worshiped God, meeting upon the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1-2). This is not something that some “apostate” church did, for: (1) Paul taught the same thing “every where in every church” (1 Cor. 4:17). Therefore, this is not the first church that heard such commands. (2) When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he had already given this command to the “churches of Galatia” which included churches in at least four cities (Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Acts 13-14). (3) Paul never condemned these people, nor told them to worship on the Sabbath day. When we consider how many *other* things he said the Corinthians had to correct, this was Paul’s chance to tell them that God still expected them to worship on the Sabbath day, if this was still in effect. The fact that such was not done, shows among other things, that they had to have had the sanction of the Holy Spirit for what they had done (1 Cor. 14:37).

Sometimes, when talking with those who think that one ought to worship on the Sabbath (seventh) day, they will tell us that God commanded the Sabbath, and we have no command to worship on the first day of the week. That is true that we find no specific command to worship on the first day of the week. Yet, we have biblical evidence of seven churches in the New Testament who were worshipping God on the Lord’s day. If God expected his people to just continue the Old Testament practice of worshipping him upon the Sabbath day rather than the first day of the week, why do we find no examples of local churches doing so? Such emphasis ought to mean something to us! In fact, Paul wrote to the Galatians that if someone wished to go back and follow the Old Testament law, which included observing the Sabbath, he is a debtor to do all the law and is “fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:3-4).

A Common Abuse Associated With the Lord’s Day

Some, in an effort to be “different,” or perhaps “unorthodox,” will from time to time implement certain practices which are entirely foreign to the New Testament. Some do this in an attempt to “bring people in.” Regardless of the reasoning for it, if we are engaging in abusing certain practices taught by the Lord, we are asking for problems, for we have sinned (1 John 3:4).

One such abuse common today pertains to the Lord’s supper. Some observe the Lord’s supper on a day other than the Lord’s day. Others observe the Lord’s supper on the Lord’s day, but do not do so every Lord’s day. Such abuses are common among those in the denominational world, and sadly, even among some brethren. Yet, it is still wrong! Just as it is not our place to go back and try to live under the Old Covenant (Gal. 5:3-4), so it is not our place to change certain practices authorized only to take place

on the Lord’s day.

Before Christ’s death, we read of his instituting the Lord’s supper, a commemoration of his body and blood, which he sacrificed for us “for the remission of sins” (Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20). After his death, we specifically read about the Jerusalem church and the church at Troas observing the Lord’s supper and doing so on the first day of the week (Acts 2:42; 20:7). In fact, the record says that upon arriving in Troas, Paul “abode seven days” and then partook of the Lord’s supper on “the first day of the week” (Acts 20:6-7). This teaches us a few things: (1) Though Paul was there for a week, the church at Troas did not partake on just any day of the week. (2) Paul stayed for “seven days” and yet did not compel these people to have a “special observance” of the Lord’s supper on his account. (3) Paul waited only seven days. This is evidence that their observance of the Lord’s supper was a weekly thing. It was not yearly, biannual, quarterly, bi-weekly, etc., but upon each week that had a first day, the church at Troas met and partook of the Lord’s supper. Furthermore, the Corinthian church met upon this day, as well as the Galatians (1 Cor. 16:1-2). To partake of the Lord’s supper with any greater or less frequency than what the first century churches did is to do something contrary to the biblical example. This is a common abuse that ought not continue. It is a sin, it is wrong, and those engaging in it will answer to God for it (Matt. 7:21-23; 2 Cor. 5:10).

Conclusion

The reason we worship upon the first day of the week is based upon biblical evidence. Our Lord gave us a new covenant, a better covenant, wherein he is our high priest (Heb. 6:20; 7:24-26; 8:1; 9:11) and we are kings and priests, serving him (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:5). When it comes to the “right day of worship,” we find no less than seven biblical examples of churches in the first century worshipping God upon the Lord’s day and not on the Sabbath. Who are we to do different, or demand that men return to Old Testament practices that have long since been done away and abolished? We are worshipping on the right day, the Lord’s day (Rev. 1:10), and in our worship, we must worship God “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).

(Note: For those interested in further study of the Sabbath-day question, go to: www.southside-churchofchrist.com. and under the “Radio Program” heading, click on: “Review Past Questions.” Look for “Questions Concerning Sabbath-Keeping.”)

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The Lord's Supper

Introduction

The Lord's supper is a profoundly significant act of worship. Proper observance brings spiritual blessings; an improper observance results in divine condemnation.

Misunderstandings abound. Roman Catholics cling to the error of transubstantiation, i.e., the belief that the elements of the bread and wine, when consecrated in the Eucharist, are transformed into the actual body and blood of the Lord. Protestants manifest confusion regarding the day and frequency of observance. Certain brethren, confusing the container with its contents, would bind the use of "one-cup."

By honest and open Bible study, all such errors can be eliminated. Therefore, let us search the Scriptures, in order to achieve an accurate and complete understanding of the Lord's supper.

Origin of Observance

How did this practice originate? Jesus instituted the Lord's supper on the night of his betrayal (Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25). For generations, the Passover had commemorated Israel's deliverance from Egyptian captivity. Christ gave it a new and deeper meaning: Henceforth, this feast would memorialize man's deliverance from the bondage of sin, a blessing realized through Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.

Emblems of Observance

Unleavened Bread. Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, he broke it and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." According to the divine law governing the Passover, the bread was unleavened, i.e., made without yeast — bread which does not rise (Exod. 12:18-20; 13:6-7; Num. 28:16-17). Originally unleavened bread symbolized Israel's hasty departure from Egypt (Exod. 12:11; Deut. 16:3-4). In time, leaven came to signify the insidious influence of sin (Matt. 16:6-12; 1 Cor. 5:6-8;

Gal. 5:7-9). In the Lord's supper, the bread represents the body of Christ, "our Passover," offered upon the cross as the perfect sacrifice for sin (1 Cor. 5:7).

Fruit of the Vine. After Jesus had taken a cup and given thanks, he said, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins." This cup — "the fruit of the vine" (Matt. 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18) symbolizes his blood that was shed for many for the remission of sins.

In the Old Testament, animals were slain in place of the offender. Yet, the blood of bulls and goats could not completely remove the stain of sin. A better and more perfect sacrifice was needed. Eternal forgiveness is made possible through the blood of Christ (Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Rev. 1:5). Through his death on the cross, Jesus became the mediator of a new and better covenant (Heb. 8:6; 9:15-22; 12:22-24).

Day of Observance

When was the Lord's supper observed? Acts 20:7 says, "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight." The breaking of bread can refer to a common meal (Acts 2:46; 20:11; 27:33-35) or to that sacred feast that commemorates the death of Christ (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 10:16).

The Sabbath was sacred under the Mosaic system, but the first day of the week carries special significance in the Christian era. On this day our Lord was raised (Luke 24:1-7; John 20:1, 19). The church of Christ was established on Pentecost, which always fell on the first day of the week (Lev. 23:15-16; Acts 2:1-4). On this day, Christians assembled to observe the Lord's supper (Acts 20:7), to give of their means (1 Cor. 16:1-2), and to worship the God of heaven (Rev. 1:10-11).

Frequency of Observance

How often did early Christians observe the Lord's supper? To answer this question, we must understand how necessary inference is used to establish Bible authority. Webster defines "inference" as "the act of passing from one proposition, statement, or judgment considered as true to another whose truth is believed to follow from that of the former." From a biblical standpoint, a necessary inference is a truth that is clearly implied by the things that are stated. Jesus often taught through parables or illustrative stories, and then called upon men to infer the necessary spiritual lesson and apply it to their lives. For example, in debating with the Sadducees about the resurrection, Jesus argued that God's statement to Moses from the burning bush necessarily implied that Abraham enjoyed a continuing existence beyond the grave (Matt. 22:23-33). Jesus also used this approach in reassuring John the Baptist that he was indeed the Christ (Matt. 11:2-6).

We learn how often to partake of the Lord's supper through necessary inference. It was the practice of the New Testament church to observe the Lord's supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). One might ask, "Which first day?" Since none is specified it follows that they did it each first day. Whenever there was a first day of the week, they observed the Lord's supper. A comparison might be made to the Old Testament commandment, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exod. 20:8; 31:14-17). Which Sabbath day? God did not specifically say, but the Jews clearly were to infer that each Sabbath day was sacred (Num. 15:32-36). As often as there was a Sabbath day it was to be observed. So it is with the Lord's supper. Saints met on the first day of the week to break bread. There is clear, positive authorization for a weekly observance of the Lord's supper. However, a monthly, quarterly, or annual communion service is without Bible authority.

Purpose of Observance

A Remembrance. Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:23-25). Strong defines the Greek word *anamnesis* (#364), translated "remembrance," as "a remembering, recollection." Louw says it refers to "the means for causing someone to remember — 'means of remembering, reminder.'"

Nations often erect monuments to commemorate historic events. Gettysburg, Arlington National Cemetery, the wreck of the USS Arizona, and the Vietnam Memorial Wall honor those who have fallen in battle. Americans regard such locations as hallowed ground.

On a personal level, we treasure the tattered pictures of loved ones. Mementos remind us of past joys. Occasionally, we visit the family cemetery, stand beside a weathered tombstone, and recall precious

memories of days now gone.

The Lord's supper is a weekly reminder of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 11:23-25). The unleavened bread brings to mind his body that was nailed to the cross. The fruit of the vine reminds us of the Savior's blood that was shed for our sins.

In observing this memorial feast, our minds return to the garden of Gethsemane, where night's tranquility is shattered by an approaching crowd. In flickering torchlight, amidst soldiers, clerics, swords and staves, we witness the deceitful kiss. As the hours advance, we observe a compounding miscarriage of justice: unlawful trials moving toward a foregone conclusion, conspiratorial plotting to provide legal justification for murder, and cowardly acquiescence on the part of the one official who could have stopped the sham proceedings. Dawn breaks, and we hear cruel mob's cry: "Let him be crucified!" As water drips from Pilate's bowl, we receive a lesson in political expediency.

Now the Condemned One is subjected to mockery and humiliation — the royal robe, the crown of thorns, the feigned tribute, the blows, the bruises, the blood, and the spittle. As the crowd moves from the judgment hall to the execution site, we hear the grating of a wooden cross being dragged through the streets. Along the way, the procession stops: Quivering muscles collapse and the body of Jesus lies in the street. Soldiers compel a bystander to bear his cross. Our Lord struggles to his feet, and the death march continues.

Arriving at the accursed hill, we hear ringing of a hammer striking nails, followed by the dull thud of a cross dropping into position. As long hours wear away, we observe the parched suffering, the unspeakable horror, terrible agony of a Roman crucifixion. The blazing sun advances slowly to mid-heaven, only to be unexpectedly shrouded in supernatural darkness. Our hearts are filled with wonder — at the miracles, at the hurled insults of the mob, at the calm and compassionate response of him who is nailed to the cross.



At three in the afternoon, through belabored breathing, we hear an agonizing cry, followed by a triumphal shout, and then lingering silence. With the night drawing nigh, soldiers crush the legs of the crucified thieves. Quickly they are engulfed in the throes of death. As the soldier comes to Jesus, we see the momentary glint of a sword, followed by a dark stain that flows downward from his side. Jesus, the promised Messiah, the Hope of Israel, the Savior of the world, is dead.

These thoughts, and more, should fill our minds as we reflect upon the significance of the Lord's supper. Prophecy and its fulfillment, the cross and all it represents, the resurrected and ascended Lord — all such teaching is brought to remembrance as we properly observe the Lord's supper.

A Communion. Paul spoke of the Lord's supper as a communion of the blood and body of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16-17). Thomas defines the Greek word *koinonia* (#2842), translated "communion/sharing/participation," as "fellowship." Strong says it signifies "association, community, joint participation." Danker says it describes "1. close association involving mutual interests and sharing, association, communion, fellowship, close relationship (hence a favorite expression for the marital relationship as the most intimate between human beings); 2. attitude of good will that manifests an interest in a close relationship, generosity, fellow-feeling, altruism; 3. abstractly for concrete sign of fellowship, proof of brotherly unity, even gift, contribution; 4. participation, sharing in something."

From a New Testament standpoint, the word "fellowship" describes our relationship, not only with God's people (Phile. 4-6), but also with the Godhead in its entirety — the Father (1 John 1:3), Son (1 Cor. 1:9), and Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14). Fellowship involves sharing (Heb. 13:16), sacrifice (Rom. 15:26-27; 2 Cor. 8:3-4), and support for those who labor in the gospel (Gal. 2:9). It also is demonstrated by our willingness to suffer (Phil. 3:10), and faithfully walk in the light (1 John 1:6-7).

In the context of 1 Corinthians 10:14-22, Paul warns the Corinthians against becoming involved in the corrupt practices of idolatry. Eating meat in the idol's temple unites the eater with evils of false religion. By participating in pagan festivals, the saints at Corinth were having fellowship with demons. Christians, by sharing the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine, are united with Christ and share in the blessings that his sacrifice affords.

A Proclamation. Paul also describe the Lord's supper as a proclamation (1 Cor. 11:26). Strong says the Greek word *kataggello* (#2605), translated "proclaim," means "1. to announce, declare, promulgate, make known; 2. to proclaim publicly, publish." Swanson offers the following definition: "proclaim throughout, report, tell with conviction, i.e., preach and advocate."

tion, i.e., preach and advocate." Danker says it means "to make known in public, with implication of broad dissemination, proclaim, announce."

The Greek word translated "proclaim" in this passage frequently refers to the work of preaching. Each of us preaches a sermon when observing the Lord's supper. The physical creation silently proclaims God's power and majesty (Ps. 19:1-6). In like manner, no spoken word is as eloquent as when God's spiritual creation — the church — jointly participates in the solemn proclamation of the Lord's supper (1 Cor. 11:26). Faithful observance of this memorial is an affirmation of God's love, mercy, and grace. Participants declare that Jesus died, was buried, arose from the grave, ascended to the Father, and will someday come again.

A Self-Examination. Finally, the Lord's supper is an occasion of self-examination (1 Cor. 11:27-30). Thomas defines the Greek word *dokimazo* (#1381a), translated "examine," as "to test, by implication to approve." Strong says it means "1. to test, examine, prove, scrutinize (to see whether a thing is genuine or not), as metals; 2. to recognize as genuine after examination, to approve, deem worthy." Danker says it means "1. to make a critical examination of something, to determine genuineness, put to the test, examine; 2. to draw a conclusion about worth on the basis of testing, prove, approve, here the focus is on the result of a procedure or examination."

Christians must regularly engage in honest self-examination (2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 6:3-4). Everything, including our words, deeds, thoughts, must be examined carefully (1 Thess. 5:21). Deacons must be tested (1 Tim. 3:10), along with those who purport to be teachers (1 John 4:1). In like manner, the Lord's supper is a time for introspection: "Is my devotion genuine? Is my faith sincere? Is my heart true? Is my life pure?"

A proper observance of the Lord's supper silently declares our faith in the gospel message. However, an improper observance may speak just as loudly, but in a negative way. Whispering, giggling, writing notes, clipping fingernails, playing with babies, and daydreaming all indicate something is seriously amiss. Those who eat and drink in an unworthy manner incur divine judgment. For this reason, many are (spiritually) weak, (spiritually) sick, and (spiritually) dead (1 Cor. 11:26-30).

Obviously, no one is truly worthy of Christ's great sacrifice. Sinners deserve condemnation. Salvation is an expression of God's grace, not human goodness. Despite our best efforts, we remain unprofitable servants (Luke 17:10). Yet, genuine disciples worship the Father in spirit and truth, i.e., they will follow the divine pattern and manifest a proper attitude (John 4:23-24).

The Right Music

When Nadab and Abihu offered “profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them,” fire went out from the Lord and devoured them on the spot (Lev. 10:1-2). Thus, we are introduced to the Lord’s displeasure toward worship devised by the wisdom, will, and impulses of men. God seeks “true worshipers” who will worship him in “spirit and in truth,” not those who worship according to their own will and wishes (John 4:23-24). True worshipers give God what he asks for when they worship him. All other worship is profane in his sight. Those who offer God vain worship are destined for wrath, not reward (cf. Matt. 15:7-9). “This is what the Lord spoke, saying: ‘By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified’” (Lev. 10:3). The Lord expects no less of us today. Therefore, we must carefully

listen to what his word teaches us about acceptable worship and reverently comply in heart and life.

Music in Worship

The Lord has commanded man to worship him with music. From ancient days the people of God have praised his glory, honor, and power with thankful strains of song: “Sing praise to the Lord, You saints of His, And give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name” (Ps. 30:4). When the Law of Moses was in force, the Lord by his prophets commanded Israel to accompany their songs with instruments of music (2 Chron. 29:25). As they offered animal sacrifices to the Lord in the temple, the assembly worshiped, the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded (2 Chron. 29:26-28).

In the New Testament Christians are taught to offer God

The Lord’s supper is a most solemn observance charged with deep and sacred meaning. It should be observed with reverence and great care. The one who partakes unworthily has sinned, not against mere emblems, but against the Lord himself. He has shown contempt for Christ’s body and blood, crucifying the Son of God afresh and putting him to an open shame (Heb. 6:4-6; 10:28-30).

Let’s take this a step further: If an improper observance makes one “weak and sickly,” please explain what *no* observance will do? How can one justify deliberately forsaking this memorial feast? The Lord was willing to give up the glories of heaven, come to this world of sin and sorrow, and die a shameful death because of his love for you. Do you care enough for Jesus to assemble with the saints when they remember him? Is that asking too much when we consider what he did for us (Heb. 10:25)?

Conclusion

In observing the Lord’s supper, faithful disciples look

backwards to the cross. Looking upward, they share fellowship with Christ their Redeemer. Looking outward, they proclaim Christ crucified to a lost and dying world. Looking inward, they engage in honest self-examination. Looking forward, they eagerly anticipate Christ’s second coming. Properly observed, the Lord’s supper will increase our faith, hope, and love. Therefore, let us resolve to more fully appreciate the meaning of Christ’s sacrifice and determine to partake of this memorial in a consistent and worthy manner.

The Lord’s supper is observed in God’s kingdom (Matt. 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18). Are you a citizen in the kingdom of heaven? Have you been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son (Col. 1:13)? If not, why not obey the gospel — being born of water and the spirit — and thus be added to the kingdom of God (John 3:3-5).

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vocal music — singing: “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19; cf. Col. 3:16; Jas. 5:13). Hence, when churches of Christ worship they will be found doing that very thing. Vocal music is one of the things right with the church (Col. 3:17).

Perhaps no other practice of worship in churches of Christ is so at odds with most of the denominational world as that of only singing while rejecting the use of mechanical instruments of music. Nonetheless, we remain resolute in following the gospel of Christ — not the wisdom, wishes and will of men — in offering music which is approved by and pleasing to the Lord.

An Insignificant Matter?

Today, the denominationalist takes for granted that using mechanical instruments of music in worship is acceptable to God. To them, a discussion such as this is not only insignificant, but divisive. But, the Scriptures declare that when it comes to worshipping the Almighty God, nothing is insignificant (remember Nadab and Abihu; cf. 1 Cor. 7:19; Matt. 23:23).

Introducing mechanical instruments of music into worship has caused division within the Lord’s church. By it, faithful brethren have erred from the truth and in unbelief have fallen away from the living God (Jas. 5:19; Heb. 3:12; 1 Tim. 4:1). Similar departures are being witnessed today. A few years ago it was announced that the Farmers Branch church of Christ, Farmers Branch, Texas, had a “minister of music” who introduced instrumental music into its programs and events (*The Dallas Morning News*, Sec. G, 6/3/95). In Bellingham, Washington (near my home) there is a “church of Christ” now using instrumental music in their worship services. Sadly, such occurrences are being repeated in churches of Christ throughout the land. These churches *do not* have the right music in their worship!

The History of Instrumental Music in Worship

Instruments of music were not used by Christians during the apostolic age. The Scriptures are silent concerning the saints using instrumental music in worship to God. History confirms the use of instrumental music in worship to be an innovation of men. The following citations demonstrate the historical development of the use of the instrument in worship as part of man’s departure from the New Testament pattern of approved worship.

In view of the controversies over the use of instrumental

music in worship which have been so violent in the British and American Protestant churches, it is an interesting question whether instruments were employed by the primitive Christians. We know that instruments performed an important function in the Hebrew temple service and in the ceremonies of the Greeks. At this point, however, a break was made with all previous practice, and although the lyre and flute were sometimes employed by the Greek converts, as a general rule, the use of instruments in worship was condemned (Edwin Dickinson, Oberlin College, *History of Music in the Western Church* 54).

Although Josephus tells of the wonderful effects produced in the Temple by the use of instruments, the first Christians were of too spiritual a fibre to substitute lifeless instruments for or to use them to accompany the human voice. Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 165-215, jrp) severely condemns the use of instruments even at Christian banquets. St. Chrysostom (A.D. 344?-407, jrp) sharply contrasts the customs of the Christians when they had full freedom with those of the Jews of the Old Testament (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, X:652).

It is the seventh century A.D. before evidence of their use in worship is seen, and then only with much consternation and objection:

Sir John Hawkins, following the Romish writers in his erudite work on the “History of Music,” makes Pope Vitalian, in A.D. 660, the first who introduced organs into churches. But students of ecclesiastical archaeology are generally agreed that instrumental music was not used in churches till a much later date; for Thomas Aquinas, A.D. 1250, has these remarkable words: “Our church does not use musical instruments, as harps and psalteries to praise God withal, that she may not seem to Judaize.” From this passage we are surely warranted in concluding that there was no ecclesiastical use of organs in the time of Aquinas. It is alleged that Marinus Sanutus, who lived about A.D. 1290, was the first that brought the use of wind organs into churches. . . . but never has either the organ or any other instruments been employed in public worship in Eastern churches; nor is mention of instrumental music found in all their liturgies, ancient or modern (*McClintock and Strong’s Cyclopedia* VIII:739).

The Protestant Reformation, for the most part, agreed that instrumental music in worship was an innovation of an apostate church and unworthy of true worshipers:

It has thus been proved, by an appeal to historical facts, that the church, although lapsing more and more into defection from the truth and into a corruption of apostolic practice, had no instrumental music for twelve hundred years; and that the Calvinistic Reformed Church ejected it

from its services as an element of Popery, even the Church of England having come very nigh to its extrusion from her worship. The historical argument, therefore, combines with the Scriptural and the confessional to raise a solemn and powerful protest against its employment by the Presbyterian Church. It is heresy in the sphere of worship (Girardeau, *Instrumental Music* 179).

A Matter of Authority

The New Testament is completely silent concerning playing instruments of music in worship to God. At the same time, it repeatedly instructs Christians to *sing* unto the Lord (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 2:12). Therefore, we properly conclude the Lord wants us to worship him in song without adding another kind of music (i.e., instrumental).

We cannot add *playing* to our *singing* without bringing a curse upon us (Gal. 1:8-9). The silence of the Scriptures restrains us from going beyond the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9; 1 Cor. 4:6). The fact that men have introduced and now widely accept the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship confirms that most believe scriptural silence is a green light to do whatever they please and conceive. But, the word of God rejects such an approach to establishing Bible authority. Please see Hebrews 7:13-14, where it is said Jesus could not be a priest on earth since he was from the tribe of Judah, “of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.” Having spoken and assigned the priesthood to the tribe of Levi, all other tribes were excluded. God’s silence did not give man the right to act beyond what was spoken.

Mike Willis summarizes the effect of the silence of the Scriptures:

The Scriptures *included* everything which should be practiced and taught, and *excluded* everything else. The silence of the Scripture was not viewed as opening the door to many unauthorized practices, but as closing the door to all of them. (A Review of “Why the Use of Instrumental Music in Worship Should Not be Made a Test of Fellowship,” *Guardian of Truth* [3/5/1992], 21).

Efforts to Defend Instrumental Music in Worship

A number of attempts are made to justify using instrumental music in worship to God. Here is a brief summary of and response to a few of them.

1. They were used in Old Testament worship. Yes, we have already admitted the Law of Moses granted divine approval for using instrumental music in temple worship (2 Chron. 29:25-28). It also approved the burning of incense, the offering of animal sacrifices, the observance of feast days, and many other similar things. By selecting one part of the law while ignoring the rest, one brings condemnation upon himself (Gal. 3:10; 5:3). Nobody is justified before God by the works of the law (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16). That should settle the matter and end man’s rush to the Law of

Moses to justify the practices of those who live under the gospel of Christ.

The Law of Moses was “a shadow of the good things to come and not the very image of the things” (Heb. 10:1). We refuse to revert to the shadows to authorize our worship in the “light of the gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:3-4; Col. 2:16-17). We will “hear Christ” — not Moses — concerning approved music in worship (Matt. 17:5; Acts 3:22-23). Throughout the New Testament of Christ it is *singing* which is commanded, commended, and continued in as the form of music which pleases God in worship (Matt. 26:30; Heb. 2:12; Rom. 15:9; 1 Cor. 14:15; Jas. 5:13; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

2. Since the Greek word *psallo* (making melody) in Ephesians 5:19 means “to pluck, twang,” an instrument must be involved. Well, what does the text say is to be plucked? Not a mechanical instrument, but the human heart! Nowhere does it say a man-made instrument of music. (See *Thayer’s Lexicon* 675, which defines *psallo* thusly: “In the N.T. to sing a hymn, to celebrate the praises of God in song.”) The gospel of Christ approves plucking the God-made instrument when singing praises: the human heart (Eph. 5:19). (Singing which is not from the heart is equally vain worship.)

3. Revelation 14:2 says there are musical instruments in heaven; therefore we can use them in our worship. We can ill-afford to take the signs and symbols of the book of Revelation and apply them to our worship on earth. The Revelation also depicts a war in heaven (Rev. 12:7): shall we approve of war in the church (cf. Jas. 4:1; Eph. 5:31-32)? No. There we find bowls full of incense and an altar of incense (Rev. 5:8; 8:3-4): shall we erect such an altar as part of our worship today (cf. Heb. 9:1-5, 23-26)? No. Revelation 14:2 depicts a triumphant scene of the redeemed as it describes the voice John heard from heaven: Its majesty (“as the voice of many waters”), its volume and power (“as the voice of a great thunder”), and its melodious praise (“as the voice of harpers harping with their harps”). We twist the Scriptures when we attempt to give these symbolic depictions of the heavenly realm physical and earthly applications.

4. We use instruments in the home. Things can be morally right but religiously wrong (like eating hamburgers and coke at home versus using them for the Lord’s supper). There is nothing morally or doctrinally wrong with playing an instrument of music until we attempt to worship God with it: whether it be at home or in the assembly of the saints.

5. It sounds pretty, we want it, and we are going to have it. Such an attitude is obstinate rebellion against God and will not characterize the attitude or conduct of one

seeking to honor God (cf. 1 Sam. 8:19, 7; 2 Cor. 5:7).

6. Worship is a right thing to do and there is no wrong way to do it. We are again reminded of Nadab and Abihu, whose well-intended worship of God was very wrong (also consider Cain, Heb. 11:4). Vain worship can indeed be offered to the Lord (Matt. 15:7-9).

7. God didn't say "not" to, so we can. Appealing to the silence of the Scriptures, many are content to go beyond what God said and do things he did not say to do. This is a perverted gospel (Gal. 1:6-9).

It is telling that the one defense of instrumental music in worship that is not heard is this: "We should use instrumental music in our worship of God because the New Testament commands it of us and the New Testament church used it in their worship of God."

Conclusion

We must continually equip ourselves with knowledge of the Scriptures as well as how to properly use them so that we do not fall victim to the innovations and adaptations of men in the area of approved music in worship (2 Pet. 3:18; 2 Tim. 2:15).

It is right that the music used to worship God in

churches of Christ is vocal. In song the saints praise God while teaching and admonishing one another (Heb. 2:12; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). We worship in song because God's word approves it; not because it is "church of Christ tradition." We refuse to add the playing of instruments to our worship because the Scriptures do not teach us to offer such music to God. To do so in spite of the silence of the Scriptures is to offer profane music before the Lord which he has not commanded us. Just as surely as God rejected the well-intentioned fire offered by Nadab and Abihu, the Lord will reject all well-intentioned playing today — and for the same reason: He has not commanded it of us (Lev. 10:1-2; Col. 3:17).

We urge our denominational friends to abandon the human innovation of mechanical instruments of music in worship and offer true (approved) worship to God (John 4:23-24). We likewise urge our brethren who believe they can compromise with the denominations and use instrumental music in worship to forsake such faithless thinking (2 Cor. 5:7; 6:14-18). To add *playing* to *singing* will surely lead to one's spiritual and eternal ruin (cf. Rev. 22:18-19).

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The Right Fund Raising

Paul instructed that each one lay something aside (in store, into a common treasury) on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1-2). In the second letter, the same apostle addressed the attitude one should have in giving saying, “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:6-7).

Every church needs funds to function. There is work to be done which takes money. The gospel is to be preached (1 Tim. 3:15), saints are to be edified (Eph. 4:12-16), and needy brethren should be cared for (1 Tim. 5:16). To do this work buildings must be bought or rented. Literature may need to be purchased. Support needs to be sent to messengers of the gospel. Thus, money is needed.

Some churches (liberal and denominational) are involved in much more work than this. Thus, there is the need for more and more money. As demands for money are increased, man often seeks additional means of raising money. So, let us consider how churches are raising their funds and what the Bible way of doing it is.

The Means Must Be Authorized

1. The need for Bible authority. God, because he is God, has authority over man. Thus, man must submit to the authority of God. Jesus is the head of the church, which is his body (Col. 1:18). Thus, any direction or action taken by the body must be at the direction of the head.

The same writer said, “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Col.3:17). To do something in the name of another means to do it by his authority or power (cf. Acts 4:7).

Thus, all that we do must have the authority of Christ behind it.

We are warned of going beyond the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9). Just as Moses was told to make the tabernacle (the type or shadow of the real) “according to the pattern,” so must the real be according to the pattern (Heb. 8:5).

2. Just as important. A lot is said in our preaching and teaching about the spending of funds being scriptural. It is just as important that the *raising* of the funds be scriptural.

Thus, we must be able to put our finger on the passage that authorizes the means we use to raise church funds.

Man’s Means of Raising Funds

Men have come up with many ways to fund the works they think the church ought to be engaged in. Let’s consider a few of them in order to see a clear contrast with God’s means.

Contributions on some day other than the first day of the week. It is not uncommon for some churches to take up a collection or love offering on a weeknight during a “revival week.”

“Billing” or “taxing” the members. Some churches will bill or tax their members based upon a pledge

that the members have made. Others will bill their members for some amount they think they need from each one if additional funds are needed.

Sales. Churches are engaged in all type of sales to generate funds. Rummage sales or yard sales are used. (For a look at how some use Acts 4 to justify rummage sales consider <http://www.epuinc.net/~rejhicks/acts4.html>.) Some use the same type of sales that schools use such as selling candy, candles, soap, cookbooks, and general catalog items. One company that specializes in church funds helps with selling plaques, tiles, or bricks.

Business. Several years ago there was a church that owned a funeral home and received income from the business. Some churches operate schools and day care centers. While it is true that there is little or no profit in such business, some income (even if it is to break even) is generated by such operations. Some of the major hospitals in our country are owned and operated by some denomination.

Car washes. Just like schools, bands, and ball teams some churches use car washes to raise funds for missionaries or youth groups.

Interest bearing accounts. Some of our own brethren have put money into money market accounts or certificates of deposit to gain more money. I have heard reports of churches having very large sums tied up in accounts drawing interest.

Bazaars, suppers and fairs are used by some.

Bingo has been used in the Catholic church since the 1930s. The game first called “beano” was renamed “bingo” by Edwin S. Lowe when someone accidentally yelled “bingo” instead of “beano.” A Catholic priest from Pennsylvania approached Lowe about using bingo to raise church funds. We all know where it went from there.

Golf tournament. The Cathedral Church of the Advent (www.adventbirmingham.com/advent/articles.asp?ID=634) has a short article on its web site entitled “Raising Funds for Episcopal Place.” It says, “Episcopal Place will raise funds with a Golf Million Dollar Hole-in-One Shoot Out July 12-14 at Ramsey Park on Montclair Road.”

Guessing Weight. This could be dangerous in some churches. One web page (stosyth.gov.uk) had a section about a “Twin Challenge.” “A vicar is asking his parishioners to guess the total weight of his twins to be born next week, to raise money for good causes. The Rev. Martin Flowerdew, 46, the vicar at St. Peter and St. Paul parish church in St. Osyth, Essex, said: ‘We invite people to guess like you would at a church fete to guess the weight of a cake.’”

Casino. The Landover Baptist Church (www.landoverbaptist.org/news0502/goldenplate.html) operates *The Golden Plate Christian Casino & Resort*. Bear with the following quote from their web page. The article is entitled, “It’s Not Gambling If It’s For Jesus!” It is interesting to say the least.

FREEHOLD, IOWA - The grand opening of Landover Baptist’s \$27 million Christian Casino & Resort, “The Golden Plate,” drew in thousands of religious high rollers last Saturday night. Christian leaders who love the thrill of gaming were treated to hours of entertainment and relaxation as they increased their weekly tithe up to 25, 50, and in some cases even 100%. After an uplifting and luxurious church service in the Golden Plate’s plush chapel the next Sunday morning, platinum tithers were pampered like the Lord’s own angels with a seven course brunch, a poolside concert by the Landover Baptist String Quartet, mud baths, massages, and a personal invitation to the Pastor’s table at dinner. Then it was back to the casino to tithe away their Saturday winnings after Sunday night’s

11 P.M. church service.

... It’s not gambling if the winnings go to a church owned business or to a Baptist person. At The Golden Plate Christian Casino and Resort in Freehold Iowa, it’s always Jesus who wins! He doesn’t place a limit on how much a person can tithe and quite frankly, if a Christian sitting at one of our tables is willing to tithe away their entire life savings, we’re not going to stop them. . . .

“Nobody loses at The Golden Plate Casino,” remarks Pastor Deacon Fred. “Even Mrs. Ida Jenkins who just tithed away her entire life savings last Wednesday night at the blackjack table didn’t really lose. Jesus has her money now and if that old woman prays hard enough, Lord willing, she’ll be off the streets and back behind one of our Christian slot machines in no time at all. If Jesus decides to give her some of her tithe money back, that’s His decision. We don’t control the roll of the dice, or the spin of the wheel. It’s all set to the Lord’s will. We leave it up to Jesus! Praise!”

I wonder what will be next. Prostitution for Jesus? Could we say, “It’s not prostitution if it is for Jesus”?

There are countless ideas of how to raise church funds. There are organizations that specialize in helping churches with fund campaigns. There is the “Church Fundraising Ideas Center” found at www.fundraisinginformation.com/listings/index2.html. Another is the CFS (Church Fundraising Services, Incorporated) found at www.churchfund-raising.com/campaigns.html. Books have been written to help “pastors” to generate more money for their churches. One such book is *The Pastor’s Guide To Fund-Raising Success* by Dr. Dorsey E. Levell and Wayne E. Groner. The ad for the book reads, “All pastors and those trying to help churches conduct capital fund campaigns or annual stewardship drives would benefit from reading this book.”

God’s Means of Raising Funds

The Right Doctrine

It is refreshing to be able to write an article for a special series on “Things Right with the Church.” So often we hear about what is wrong in the world and what is wrong in the Lord’s church. Indeed, there is much wrong in the world and in the church, and it all must be exposed and corrected. However, it is good to balance our study and remind ourselves from time to time of what is right in the Lord’s church. There are many things that are right with the Lord’s church. It is important to teach what is right with the Lord’s church so that our young people will be motivated to be a part of the Lord’s church, and those who have been Christians for some time will be encouraged to remain faithful in the Lord’s church.

Is Anything Right With the Church?

Before examining the topic of the right doctrine, we would do well to ask ourselves, “Is anything right with the church?” Some people today may question whether or not we can be “right” about anything in the Lord’s church. They question and cast doubt concerning our knowing the truth and being “right.” They poke fun at and chide those who claim that they are “right.” From some things I hear today, it is almost as if being “right” is a bad thing, an impossible task to achieve, or the height of arrogance.

In contrast to the many means that man has, God has only one means of raising church funds.

Free will offering of the members. The only mean for churches raising funds is for the members to give a free will offering. When there was a need as in the case of the needy saints at Jerusalem, the saints sold possessions and “brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles’ feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need” (Acts 4:34-35). That was a free will offering. The individual members sold what they needed to in order to make the free will offering. This was not a case of the church selling goods to raise funds.

When Agabus said there would be a famine “Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul” (Acts 11:29-30). Again, each disciple made his own determination about what he would give. The fact that “it” was sent, suggests that the funds were collected into a common treasury.

Paul instructed that each one lay something aside (in store, into a common treasury) on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1-2). In the second letter, the same apostle addressed the attitude one should have in giving saying, “God

loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:6-7).

On the first day of the week. The disciples are commanded to give on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1-2). That day is the only day that is authorized. Thus, the free will offering is to be on that day and only on that day.

After reading these and other texts that deal with church funds, one will notice that there was no tithing, members being told a certain amount to give, billing, taxing, or matching of funds. It was a free will offering on the Lord’s day and nothing more.

Those of us who work and worship with churches that practice the very thing we can read about in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 and other texts should be comforted by the fact that what we practice is according to the word of the Lord.

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So, I ask you, “Is it proper to speak of the ‘right’ name, the ‘right’ organization, the ‘right’ worship, etc.?” Yes, it is proper to speak of what is “right” in the Lord’s church. Remember, the Lord’s ways are “right” (Acts 13:10), and let us never forget that there is a “right way” (2 Pet. 2:15). When we walk in Lord’s ways we are “right”!

Preaching the Right Doctrine

Doctrine (Gr. *didachee*) simply means teaching, either the act of teaching, or that which is taught. God’s plan to save mankind involves teaching. Those who are saved are first “*taught of God*” (John 6:45). God wants people taught, and he wants them taught the right doctrine. He does not want the doctrines of men taught. God wants his word taught. Jesus warned against man-made doctrine (Matt. 16:12). Why? The doctrines of men lead to a vain religion (Matt. 15:9; Mark 7:7), and they lead people away from Christ and into apostasy (Col. 2:22; 1 Tim. 4:1-2). Today, the doctrines of men abound in pulpits, classrooms, and seminaries across the land. One key element of denominationalism is the presence of man-made doctrine. Human creeds and councils dominate the thinking of many religious people today. In many churches the doctrines of men are exalted above the doctrine of Christ, apostolic tradition is replaced with human tradition, and men make laws where God has not legislated. Man-made doctrines such as “salvation by faith alone,” “once saved always saved,” “born depraved,” “the rapture,” “infant baptism,” “latter-day revelations,” “speaking in tongues,” “Sabbatarianism,” “instrumental music,” “the Papacy,” “Premillennialism,” “faith healing,” “unconditional predestination,” etc., are not found in the right doctrine of God’s word. Many are following the traditions and doctrines of men rather than the word of God. There is always a constant challenge before us to bring ourselves and others back to the right doctrine of God’s word when necessary.

The Lord’s church has the right doctrine because it has elders, preachers, and teachers who are able to teach the right doctrine. God wants his people to be taught right so he has planned for teachers in the local church (Acts 13:1; Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11). One qualification for both an elder and a preacher is “apt to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 2:24). Godly elders, preachers, and teachers in the first century did not teach just anything. They taught only the right doctrine. For example, Timothy preached “the words of the faith, and of the good doctrine” (1 Tim. 4:6, 11, 13, 16; 6:2). He taught the doctrine of the Apostle Paul (2 Tim. 3:10). Titus also preached “sound doctrine” and a pure doctrine uncorrupted by the things of this world (Tit. 2:1, 7). Elders in the first century also followed the doctrine of the Apostle Paul (Acts 20:20). They taught the right doctrine (1 Tim. 5:17) and held fast the “sound doctrine” of God’s word (Tit. 1:9). What is “sound doctrine”? Paul says that

“sound doctrine” is “the gospel” (1 Tim. 1:10-11). The right doctrine to be taught comes from “sound words,” which are “the words of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Tim. 6:3). Dedicated elders, preachers and teachers in the Lord’s church of the first century followed the example of Jesus the Master Teacher who taught “the way of God in truth” (Matt. 22:16). All elders, preachers and Bible class teachers can do the same today. All can teach the right doctrine. When elders, preachers, teachers are content to teach only the words of the faith, the words of the gospel, and the words of Jesus Christ, they will teach the right doctrine.

Elders, are you teaching the right doctrine? Elders may desire to lead a local church using pop-psychology or the latest business leadership techniques. However, godly elders will lead with the Bible in their hearts and in their hands. Preachers, are you teaching the right doctrine? It is becoming more and more common to hear preaching that is more like stand-up comedy than gospel preaching. Some preachers today desire to entertain through joke-telling and cute stories rather than teaching right doctrine. Preachers today need to get back to following Paul’s words to Timothy: “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2). Remember preachers, Scripture is “profitable for doctrine” (2 Tim. 3:16-17), not entertainment. Faith comes by hearing God’s word (Rom. 10:17), not by entertainment. And what about local churches looking for a preacher? Are you looking for a popular entertainer who is polished in oratory and will keep his lesson short, or, are you looking for a man who is a sound, “book-chapter-and-verse” preacher of right doctrine? Bible class teachers, are you teaching the right doctrine? How do you spend the majority of your time in the classroom? Do you spend it talking about daily affairs and playing games? Or, do you concentrate on teaching the right doctrine?

The Lord’s church has the right doctrine because it has the apostles’ doctrine. When the Lord’s church began on the day of Pentecost, they continued in some right things. The first century church was right because it stood upon the right doctrine of the apostles. One responsibility



of the apostles was to teach the words of Jesus after he ascended back into heaven (Matt. 28:20). They did this, and the New Testament church followed their doctrine. Luke writes, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). After the day of Pentecost the apostles continued to teach the right doctrine in Jerusalem and in many other cities (Acts 4:2, 18; 5:21, 25, 28; 11:26; 18:11; 20:20). What was their doctrine? They taught the word of God (Acts 5:42; 15:35; 18:11; 28:31). They taught the doctrine of the Lord (Acts 13:12). Where did they teach this doctrine? In every church (1 Cor. 4:17). One example of apostolic teaching is found in the relationship of Paul and Timothy. Paul taught Timothy the truth, Timothy taught faithful men the same truth, and those faithful men taught others the same truth (2 Tim. 2:2). In this way, the Lord’s church in the first century continued being right as it followed the right doctrine of the apostles.

The Lord’s church has the right doctrine because the Apostles’ doctrine is Holy Spirit doctrine. The Lord’s church in the first century was right because it stood upon the doctrine of the apostles who themselves were right. The apostles were right because the Holy Spirit who inspired them was right. The apostles did not teach their own human wisdom. Just as Jesus taught others only what the Father had taught him (John 7:16; 8:28), so the apostles taught others only what the Holy Spirit taught them. Jesus promised the apostles this: “For the Holy Spirit shall teach you in that very hour what ye ought to say” (Luke 12:12). On another occasion Jesus gave the apostles a similar promise: “But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you” (John 14:26). Paul also wrote, “Which things also we speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words” (1 Cor. 2:13). Paul, like the rest of the apostles, was right in what he taught because what he taught came directly from Jesus Christ through the Holy

Spirit (Gal. 1:11-12).

Why study about the right doctrine? There are false doctrines being taught today in the world and in the Lord’s church, and God’s people stand in danger of being “tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Eph. 4:14). Some brethren are turning away from “sound doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:3), while others are “teaching things which they ought not” (Tit. 1:11). There are also brethren which “cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned” (Rom. 16:17). Even some local churches today, like Pergamum and Thyratira, are allowing false doctrine to go unchecked in their midst (Rev. 2:14-15, 20). It is imperative, therefore, that we know what the right doctrine is and then teach it by all Christians so that souls can be saved and grounded in the faith.

Yes, there are things right with the church. The Lord’s church can be right today contrary to what some may say. The church can be right when it is taught the truth of Jesus (Eph. 4:21) and the wisdom of Jesus (Col. 1:28; 2:7). It can be right when it obeys the pattern of apostolic doctrine (Rom. 6:17). It can be right when it holds fast the apostolic doctrine. Paul’s command to the Thessalonians is the same for us today: “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” (2 Thess. 2:15). The Lord’s church can be right when it abides in “the doctrine of Christ” and does not go beyond “the doctrine of Christ” (2 John 9-11). The religions of the denominational world need to lay aside their man-made doctrines and come to the right doctrine of God’s word. The Lord’s church needs to remain true to the right doctrine. May we all have a desire to be right with the Lord and be a part of his true church which teaches the right doctrine.

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The Right Standard of Authority

The Other Flood Story

God looked at the world and saw that man was wicked. He decided to destroy the earth, man, and beast because the earth had become so corrupt. However, there was one man who followed the law of God. This man's name was Noah. God went to Noah and told him that he was going to destroy the earth. He commanded Noah to build an ark so he and his family could be saved. God gave him specifications for the materials and the measurements of the ark. For example, he told Noah to build the ark out of gopher wood and to make it 300 cubits long. He also told Noah that he should take a male and a female of every living thing into the ark with him so that life would not be completely destroyed.

Noah listened to God but decided that it would be better to build the ark out of oak instead of gopher wood. He also decided that the ark should be 350 cubits long to make room for two females of each kind instead of just one. Noah thought that taking three of all the animals would be better in case one of the females got sick. The rain fell and the floods came. Strangely, Noah's ark began to sink. When he asked God why, God told him that he had not followed his commandments. Noah explained that he had followed God's instructions but had changed them in order to make the ark better. God did not accept this excuse and . . .

What would have happened to Noah if he refused to fully obey God? He probably would have perished in the flood along with everyone and everything else in the ark. Luckily, Noah did obey God perfectly in building the ark and life was sustained.

This story may seem outrageous, but it illustrates the principle used by people today. People believe that they can

worship God in whatever way they see fit. They believe that they have a right to their own opinions. They have the attitude that everyone who believes in God will go to heaven no matter what he believes or practices. Many people think that they can change the teachings of the Bible to fit whatever lifestyle they live, whatever practices of worship they take part in, or whatever they think is right.

Can we believe whatever we want to or do we have a standard of authority that we must abide by? There must be something that everyone can look to as "the standard," but what is it? In order to answer these questions, let us first observe what we should not use as standards of authority.

Our Opinions

All men and women are allowed to have their own opinions, but only to a certain degree. In some ways, we have the right to decide what we want to believe. For example, Paul said that due to the present distress, the Corinthians who had not yet married should remain unmarried (1 Cor. 7:8, 26). This was wise judgment from an inspired writer, but was not commanded. Later, Paul stated that they were allowed to get married if they wished (1 Cor. 7:9). These men and women were supposed to and had the right to make up their own minds about marriage.

On the other hand, whenever God has spoken on a subject, we do not have a right to our own opinion. God has revealed many truths that we must accept, whether we agree with them or not. As far as marriage goes, God has given us the choice as to whether or not we marry. Yet God has made it very clear that, if we do get married, we are to remain married. The only exception that God has given is if sexual immorality takes place (Matt. 19:9). That is what

God has commanded so that is what we must follow. We are not allowed to divorce our spouse because we “fall out of love,” have irreconcilable differences, or because the beans are always burned. God’s law takes precedence over our opinions.

There is an example in the Old Testament of two people who followed their own opinions. Nadab and Abihu were two of Aaron’s sons. They were both allowed to go onto Mount Sinai with Moses, Aaron, and the seventy elders in order to see God (Exod. 24:9-10). Later, Moses was told by God to make them priests (Exod. 28:1). These men were obviously special to God and he gave them a great responsibility — to serve as priests and offer sacrifices that were commanded by him. Sadly, they were of the opinion that they could offer a different sacrifice to God than what he had authorized. As a result of this “profane fire,” they were consumed by fire from heaven (Lev. 10:1-2).

Denominations have the same attitude that Nadab and Abihu had when they teach their own doctrines and follow their own creeds. Many times, the doctrines that are contained in their creed books contradict the Bible. Consider the following passage from the *Discipline*, a Methodist creed book: “We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort” (North, *Handbook On Church Doctrines* 74).

The only way that the Methodists can come to this conclusion (we are justified by faith only) is by offering their own opinion. God has revealed to us the truth on this subject in James 2:24, 26. This passage says that one must have both faith and works in order to be justified.

Our Traditions

Another device that we should not use as our standard of authority is man’s tradition. Unfortunately, brethren today try to make their own tradition part of God’s tradition. God’s tradition is the word of God that we must abide by (2 Thess. 2:15). However, man’s tradition is simply what we have decided to do on our own.

There are two ways that we can participate in our own traditions. One of the ways is by following certain traditional procedures as we take part in the worship that God has revealed to us. For example, we are commanded to sing, and we are commanded to partake of the Lord’s supper. Therefore, brethren have decided to sing a song before the Lord’s supper in order to prepare their minds to partake. This is fine. There is absolutely nothing wrong with us singing a song before the Lord’s supper. The problem begins whenever someone tries to make that tradition a part of God’s tradition.

If we believe that we are commanded to sing a song in order to prepare our minds for the Lord’s supper, then we are sadly mistaken. Nowhere in the Bible did God command men to do this. This is simply a long-standing tradition of men that could scripturally be changed. The same is true with the number of songs we sing, whether or not we have a Scripture reading, how many times we meet on the first day of the week, whether or not we meet on Wednesday, etc.

The second way that we can participate in our own traditions is when we do something that is unscriptural altogether. This is prevalent in the denominational world. Many denominations have decided to play an instrument when singing praises to God. Some have gone a step further and allowed bands or even full orchestras to play in the assembly. They turn worship to God into a concert event! God commanded that we sing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), but he never once authorized the use of instruments in worship for Christians. Anyone that participates in this is following his own tradition, not God’s tradition.

Many “churches” have incorporated their own traditions into their organization, structure, and various practices. The fact that many of them operate as a denomination proves this. Each individual congregation is supposed to act independently, like the churches of the New Testament did. But, whenever men decide to structure themselves as a denomination, they are disregarding God’s tradition. When they decide to include choirs, organs, unqualified “pastors,” sprinkling for baptism, ball teams, etc., they are participating in traditions of men. We must not allow ourselves to make God’s law ineffective because of our traditions (see Matt. 15:3-9).

Our Emotions

A final device that we should not use as our standard of authority is our emotions. There is nothing wrong with us getting emotional about our worship to God. Whenever the one who is leading the Lord’s supper finishes his thoughts with a cracking voice and a tear running down his cheek, we usually feel touched, and perhaps we even cry ourselves. Whenever one comes forward to be baptized, we might have chills run up and down our spines. When we are in the middle of a group of Christians who are singing their hearts out to the Lord, we will probably feel emotional. However, we must not let these type of emotions guide us. It is impossible for us to know what is right and what is wrong by our emotions.

Some people today believe that they can be guided by how they feel. They believe that there must be something inside of them that is leading them to do the right thing. Many of the denominations use this principle to let people know that God has “saved” them. They preach that the Holy

Spirit will come into a person's heart and that person will then know that he is saved. When we read what the Bible says, we realize that this cannot be the case. Peter spoke plainly to those who were lost and told them that if they believed and were baptized they would be saved (Acts 2:38). Who should we trust, a denominational preacher or the apostle Peter? I have never felt anyone or anything come into my body and I am confident that I am saved because I believe Peter. He taught the inspired word of God which is the truth (John 17:17).

One man who was guided by his emotions was Judas. After he betrayed Christ, he felt sorrowful for what he had done. In fact, he was so sorrowful that he went out and killed himself (Matt. 27:5). Did Judas' emotions lead him to do the right thing? Of course not! He let his emotions take control of his life, and he will be punished because of it. We must not depend on our emotions to be the standard that we live by.

The Standard

If we cannot depend on our opinions, traditions, or emotions to act as our standard of authority, then what should we use? As suggested throughout this article, we must use the word of God as our standard of authority. After all, it is the "power of God to salvation for everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16).

The word of God is the only inspired book that we have. None of the denominational creed books is inspired; un-inspired men wrote all of them. The word of God, on the other hand, can prepare us to live our lives as Christians should and can ultimately make us perfect. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

It is our responsibility to read, study, and understand the Scriptures that God has given to us. This is the only way that we can learn what is acceptable or unacceptable to him. Our opinions, traditions, and emotions are worthless without God's word guiding us. We must always remember the following passage: "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9).

Noah made the right decision and listened to God. What will you do?

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"The Right Name" continued from front page

The Name of the Husband

Throughout the Testament of Christ, the church is portrayed as the bride of Christ. Paul informed the Corinthians, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2). In Ephesians chapter five, Paul discussed the husband/wife relationship and said, "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:32). How would you feel, as a husband, if your wife decided to wear the name of some other man? What do you suppose Christ thinks about those who propose to be his bride, yet wear and honor the name of another? The church is the bride of Christ and wears the name of Christ. If the church does not wear the name of Christ, then it must not be married to Christ!

The Name of the Savior

Christ "is the saviour of the body" (Eph. 5:23), "which is the church" (Col. 1:24). There is only one Savior as the Bible speaks of "a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). I would not want to be in a church that does not wear the Savior's name, would you? If the church does not wear the name of the Savior, then it must not be the Savior's church!

The Name of the Deliverer

The church that belongs to Christ has a glorious destiny as it will be "delivered up" to God by Christ when the end comes (1 Cor. 15:24). Do you want to be among the elect that are delivered up to the Father? Then, you need to be in the church that wears the name of the deliverer, and that is Christ.

Since salvation is in Christ and his name (2 Tim. 2:10; Acts 4:12), we must get into Christ by being "baptized into Christ" (Gal. 3:27) and wear the name of Christ. The name of Christ is "a name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9). For the church to wear another name is for it to wear an inferior name. Thus, it would be an inferior church. Will you become a member of the right church that wears the right name?

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**To fear God is to
reverence Him, re-
spect Him, and**

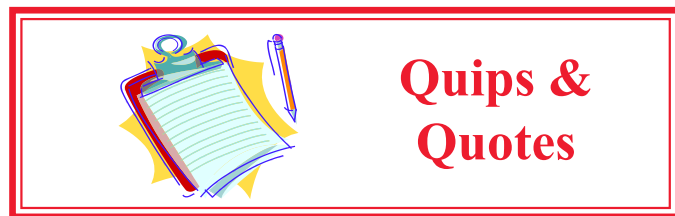
Local Church Autonomy

In his wisdom, God organized the church into local congregations. Nowhere in Scripture is there any semblance of organizational structure above the congregational level. There are no synods, presbyteries, conventions, or councils. This feature, which establishes each congregation as an autonomous structure, greatly impedes the progress of any widespread apostasy. Elders are instructed to “shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers” (1 Pet. 5:2). If a congregation or group of congregations depart from truth, other faithful churches are not compelled by some central “authority” to follow them into error. Disregarding the principle of local church autonomy is precisely what led to the establishment of not only the Catholic hierarchy, but also the uniform digression into error which is characteristic of all its congregations.

It is important to note that autonomy does not give any congregation the right to “self-determination” in regard to work, worship, or teaching. Christ, in his word, has already established those things by his authority. The “self-determination” resides in the ability of each local congregation to righteously apply and adhere to God’s will, irrespective of any outside pressure or influence.

Self-Sufficiency

God established the church as a religious institution. It is “the pillar and ground of the truth” (cf. 1 Tim. 3:15). He limited the work of the church to spiritual matters: edification, evangelism, and a limited benevolence in the care of its own destitute members. In this limited scope, the church is fully equipped to accomplish the work God gave it to do. In the first century, congregations preached the gospel of Christ (cf. 1 Thess. 1:8), edified their own members (Eph. 4:11-16), and fulfilled their benevolent obligations (Acts 11:27-30). This work was done without the involvement of any man-made institutions. Truly, God’s wisdom is demonstrated in the self-sufficient nature of the church.



Quips & Quotes

Panel Named to Revise Priest Sex-Abuse Policy

“Vatican City — The Vatican and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Wednesday named an eight-member commission to revise the American Church’s zero-tolerance policy toward sexual abuse by priests, which the Vatican refused last week to approve without changes.

Leadership

We live in a culture which worships youth. Advertisers cater to the young, entertainment is skewed to the interests of teenagers and young adults, and often the elderly are considered irrelevant to our culture. God, however, placed a premium upon the wisdom that is present in one who has the “hoary head.” A plurality of elders in each congregation (cf. Acts 14:23); the limitation of the office to men who hold the particular abilities and character needed for such a leadership role (cf. 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9), and the compassionate shepherding and leadership by example enjoined upon the pastors of God’s people (cf. 1 Pet. 5:2-4) are all wonderful expressions of the superior organization of the Lord’s church when compared to the inventions of men.

Conclusion

Much more could be said regarding the organization of God’s church. The apostles, who had such an important work in the first century, the office of deacon, the work of the evangelist, those who are teachers and worship leaders in the church, all of these are worthy of note. Too, reams could be written of the departures of men and how such failures demonstrate the transcendent design of the divine institution of God. The preceding contrasts serve to illustrate sufficiently the wisdom of God and the superior design of his institution, the church. “To the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:10-11).

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(Editor’s Note: There are three remaining articles in this series which we will run in the next issue of Truth Magazine.)

“In naming the commission with unusual speed, church officials signaled their desire to avoid an extended period of confusion over the rules for disciplining priests. If the commission finishes its work in time, the U.S. bishops could adopt the changes at a previously scheduled mid-November meeting in Washington.

“At least two of the Vatican delegates have expressed reservations about the policy enacted by the U.S. bishops in June, which calls for the permanent removal from ministry of any priest who has ever sexually abused a minor” (The Indianapolis Star [October 24, 2002], A6).

Inscription May be Oldest Link to Jesus

“Washington — A burial box that was recently discovered in Israel and dates to the first century could be the oldest archaeological link to Jesus Christ, according to a French scholar whose findings were published Monday.

“An inscription in the Aramaic language — ‘James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus’ — appears on an empty ossuary, a limestone burial box for bones.

“Andre Lemaire said it’s ‘very probable’ the writing refers to Jesus of Nazareth. He dates the ossuary to A.D. 63, just three decades after the crucifixion.

“Lemaire, a specialist in ancient inscriptions at France’s Practical School of Higher Studies, published his findings in the November/December issue of Biblical Archaeology Review.

“The Rev. Joseph Fitzmyer, a Bible professor at Catholic University who studied photos of the box, agrees with Lemaire that the writing style ‘fits perfectly’ with other first century examples.

“But the big problem is, you have to show me the Jesus in this text is Jesus of Nazareth, and nobody can show that,’ Fitzmyer said.

“Lemaire writes that the distinct writing style, and the fact that Jews practiced ossuary burials only between 20 B.C. and A.D. 70, puts the inscription in the time of Jesus and James who led the early church in Jerusalem.

“James is depicted as Jesus’ brother in the Gospels and head of the Jerusalem church in the Book of Acts and Paul’s epistles.

“The first century Jewish historian Josephus recorded that ‘the brother of Jesus the so-called Christ, James by name,’ was stoned to death in A.D. 62” (The Indianapolis Star [October 22, 2002], A1).

Preachers Needed

Selma, Alabama: The Church of Christ at 2420 Poplar Street in Selma is in need of a full-time preacher as soon as possible. The church is able to provide some support and other area support could be provided. If you are interested, contact Alvin Reaves, 712 Arsenal Pl., Selma, AL 36701. Call 334-872-1476 after 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, or call the meeting house and leave a message: 334-875-8330.

Good Study Workbooks

The Life of Christ

by Olen Holderby



This workbook is actually a study of Christ as he is depicted in the gospels. It is a good study for either teens or adults. 13 lessons. #80073.

\$4.99

Learning to Deny Self

by Donnie V. Rader



Adults or high-school students will benefit from this 13-lesson study of the self-discipline required of Christians. #80220.

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