

Seek The Old Paths

"Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths...and walk therein."
(Jeremiah 6:16)

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CAN A PERSON BE SAVED IN A DENOMINATION?

Roger D. Campbell

Are there Christians in all denominations? Are the members of denominations saved? Can one be a member of a denomination and be pleasing to God? Should we have fellowship with denominations? Many members of the church are asking these questions today. Sadly, they are receiving conflicting answers. There is division in the church today, real division, because brethren are supporting different positions regarding these matters. Some are in favor of accepting and supporting denominations, some are totally against it; and, yet others are not quite sure what we should do. As in many other cases, some claim that we cannot really know the right answer, so we must leave this matter in God's hands. Regardless of how we answer these relevant questions, our answers must not be based on emotions or traditions, but be according to the word of God, as it is written, *"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God"* (1 Peter 4:11). We would like to first look at some truths about the relationship between Christ and His church, then note the answer to the question: "Where is salvation?"

CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH

The word "Christ" means Messiah or anointed one (John 1:41,42). "Church" is translated from the

Greek word *ekklesia*, which means an assembly ("He dismissed the assembly," Acts 19:41) or a chosen group of people whom the Lord has called out of the world. The word "church" is used in three different ways in the New Testament. 1) It sometimes refers to the universal church. For example, Jesus is the head of "the church" (Eph. 1:22,23). 2) It can refer to a local church or congregation. Paul wrote to the "church of God which is in Corinth" (1 Cor. 1:2). Sometimes the Holy Spirit speaks of a plurality of congregations or local churches, such as in 1 Thessalonians 2:14: *"For ye brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus...."* 3) The word "church" can have reference to the actual assembly of disciples. An example of this is found in 1 Corinthians 11:18: *"For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you...."*

Please notice that in the Bible the word "church" (or the plural form, "churches") never refers to a denomination. There are some simple reasons for that. First, since no denominations existed in the first century when the New Testament was written, then the church of the Lord of which we read in the Bible is not a denomination. God's church is not a part of a denomination, it is not made up of many different

denominations, and just has nothing to do with them. Please remember these facts as you continue reading this article and study your Bible from time to time.

Just what is the relationship between Christ and His church? One passage of Scripture in which this relationship is plainly seen is Ephesians 5:23-25, where we read, *"for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."* From these verses, some facts are easily seen: Christ is the head of the church (5:23), He is the savior of the body (5:23), the church is obligated to obey Christ (5:24), Christ loved the church (5:25), and He gave Himself for the church (5:25). Notice that throughout these verses, as well in the rest of the New Testament, the plain teaching is that Jesus has only one spiritual body. *"There is one body"* (Eph. 4:4). And what is this one body? It is Jesus' church: *"And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth*

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Saved In A Denomination?...



Guest Editorial...

THE GOSPEL, THE FREE MARKET, AND THE PERFORMING ARTS

Alan Adams

The entertainment-in-the-name-of-religion mentality shows no signs of abating. In the denominational world, we have such as “Newsong ‘98.” From a mailout, the United Methodist Center in Louisville, KY says, “Welcome to Paradise (Luke 23:43).” It is a big three day boogie-fest featuring “gospel” singing groups like the “Supertones,” “Out of Eden,” and so on. Some of these performers look like something the dogs drug up and the cats wouldn’t have. But, not to be outdone, the Southside church of Christ in Hopkinsville, KY “presents...Think Different.” According to their mailout, this will be a youth rally shindig. It will include “AVB (Acapella Vocal Band). They’ve been off the circuit for a while but they’re back with a totally revamped image... **the image of christ.**” And, lest you’ve been worried about the propriety of all this, be apprised that these Acapella people “have lost the tract sound and have returned to the pure harmony sounds that are the foundations of our rich Church of Christ acapella singing heritage.” – Yeah, right.

To further help young Christians develop a strong sense of reverence and dignity, the Southside brethren will have a skit with the **veggie tales**. And, they have called on the services of Freed-Hardeman University to send their way “Heaven’s Gate.” Come one, come all and “See the 20ft x 80ft wall of Jericho that **will** come-a-tumblin’-down. See the World Order take on the God Order in a center stage wrestling match extravaganza!”

These brethren, those involved, and those who just can’t see anything wrong with this sort of thing have a heart problem that only

repentance can cure.

The Gospel is God’s “power” to save (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor 1:18-21) that which is more precious in value than the “whole world” (Matt 16:26). The Free Market, though not mentioned in these words, yet is a concept upheld by the Scriptures: Wages for work (1 Tim 5:18); buying and selling (James 4:13); and property ownership (Acts 5:1-4). Likewise, the Performing Arts is a scripturally legitimate concept. Humans are aesthetic beings designed to seek and appreciate things of beauty and pleasure (cf. Gen. 2:8).

Problems arise however, when otherwise noble concepts are commingled. There is the proper time and realm for the utilization and appreciation of “every creation of God [which] is good” (1 Tim. 4:4). Jesus took a dim view of people mixing their business with what should have been the time and place for worship (John 2:16). Paul did not view preaching as the appropriate time for pageantry and performance (1 Cor. 2:1).

The performance mentality comes in many forms. Hardly a day goes by that I don’t receive some type of brochure advertising and promoting some *Greeeaattt* (said the way Tony the Tiger describes Frosted Flakes) activity coming up. I got one just yesterday advertising an upcoming singing “featuring brother ___” as the leader. Preachers are promoted with cherubic pictures and pedigrees as long as your arm. I’ve got one where the preacher’s pose is like that of the statue of the Meditating Philosopher (elbow on the knee and chin resting on the fist) that used to be shown on the Doby Gillis Show. Such pomp. The Spirit says that it is through the

“foolishness of the thing preached” (1:21, ASV footnote) that believers are saved, not through the foolishness of self-promoting preachers. Preachers, polished in the art of theatrics, dramatic gesture, and tremulous voice are not God’s method of attracting people (John 6:44-45).

Should song leaders work at doing their best to see that the congregation does its best when praising God in song? Certainly. Should song leaders be the featured attraction, and should they gyrate, carry on, and blare out about 100 decibels above everyone else? Certainly not. Emphasis must lie upon the “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs,” not the performance of the song leader.

I once got a really slick brochure announcing an upcoming Youth event. It was the same kind of hype – “Come and hear brother ___” as though he were a celebrity. Three or four singing groups are pictured and featured in the brochure. One group even has the gall to call itself *Justification*. I’d love to hear some “justification” for these and others turning worship into a Hip-Hop, Teeny-Bop, High ‘ol Time. Yes, worship is to be a pleasant and enjoyable experience as each *participant* worships God in “spirit” (John 4:24), not because the audience is entertained by hired performers.

Crossing the lines of fellowship to peddle wares is another problem. There is a present and massive proliferation of Christians forming quartets (some call them “Gospel” groups) and then going out to perform at and for denominational activities and groups. I have always tried to point out that denominationalism is wrong (John 17:20-21; Matt. 15:13). I have always known that we ought not to fellowship or “bid God speed” to those who do not “abide in the teaching of Christ” (2 John 9-11) or to those “unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph. 5:11). I love the people who are in the denominations. I don’t love their error, their sectarianism, but I love them and am trying to help as many as I can get out. I do not do this by playing with, performing for, and otherwise leaving the impression with them that “Hey, I’m OK and you’re OK.”

I am told that quartet singing is a legitimate method by which to “teach” the denominations. It has actually been argued in my hearing that by way of an “acappella quartet,” we can “teach” the denominations the correct kind of music to be used in worship. But, you see, the same passages that authorize acappella music and are silent about instrumental music, are also silent about using “songs, hymns and spiritual songs” for the purpose of performing for others. Some of the same passages that authorize *only* acappella music in worship to God, also authorize congregational singing: “*speaking one to another in psalms...teaching and admonishing one another*” (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Quartet, or other special music, is not “speaking one to another.” So, if one is truly concerned about “teaching” the denominations the correct kind of music in worship, it should at least be congregational singing.

To be sure, singing praises to God is not limited to the worship assembly (Matt. 26:30; Acts 16:25; James 5:13). I sing all the time. Every Christian should love to sing hymns of praise. Sometimes when I sing, other people may hear me, just as the prisoners heard Paul and Silas (Acts 16:25). This is a far cry, however, from (A) using what is to be “praises unto God” for the purpose of performing for and entertaining an audience; and (B) one group singing to and for the rest.

Some say that since it is OK to preach to or teach a group of denominational people; and since singing involves “teaching” (Col. 3:16), then it would be OK to “sing” to a group of denominational people. Can anyone honestly believe that I could, with God’s approval, say, stand up before a denominational crowd and do a solo (or add three more people for a quartet!) number on “Amazing Grace,” and call that “preach[ing] the word” (2 Tim. 4:2). The “teaching and admonishing” connected with singing “songs, hymns, and spiritual songs,” is that of brethren mutually edifying and encouraging one another by singing together. It ought to be pretty clear that Jesus did not say “Go ye into all the world and *sing* the gospel to every creature.”

Some who go about performing

for and playing with the denominations say, “It is not our intention to have fellowship with them.” What precisely would one have to do in order for it to be said, “It *is* his intention to have fellowship with the denominations?” If getting together with manmade religions, clapping hands, stomping feet, singing to, picnicking with, and just generally having a “high old time” with them does not constitute “having fellowship with,” or “bidding god speed to” them; then, what kinds of activities would?

Merchandising the gospel seems to be at the bottom of much of this. Whereas we are supposed to have something to **tell** people, it seems that many have something to **sell**. Consider *The Jubilee* and the *Promise Keepers*. Read their material and note the ads for tapes and materials. A conservative estimate will show that this is big business.

Often I have found myself wondering how or why so many brethren have gotten themselves so far off track — particularly preachers. There are so many whom I know personally and who have in latter days come to teach and do things they never would have done years ago. Why? An old wise head once told me, “When you see people doing and saying things that don’t seem to fit what they used to say and do, and you want to know why; it’s often as simple as following the Money Trail.” Truly, the “*love of money is a root of all kinds of evil*” (1 Tim. 6:10).

Today, like no other time, the market is saturated with tapes, tracts, books, and talents for sale. Are some making a killing off the gospel? I don’t think I’m overstating here. We have preachers who send out chits (amount owed) *before* they will condescend to go and preach meetings (or speak at “seminars”). These chits cover everything from demanded mileage, meals, motels, to a very comfortable, shall we say, stipend (wage).

Some brethren plead for money that they may be able to devote their time to writing Bible literature which they in turn sell for their own profit. Have you seen the prices on some of that literature? What we used to call “orphan” homes solicit money from Christians and church-

es, but have you ever talked to them about helping you adopt a child? You’d better have a sizeable bank account. How does all this fit with 2 Corinthians 6:4-10? Sometimes I think people have misread the word “chargeable” in 1 Thessalonians 2:9. Maybe they think it’s talking about how much can we charge.

Stack what’s happening now up against the First Century. We are far afield in so many ways. Much of it is the result of ignorance; some of it lust; and some of it pure greed.

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Saved In A Denomination?...

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all in all" (Eph. 1:22,23).

In addition to Jesus being the head and Savior of the church, He is also the builder of it: *"And upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"* (Matt. 16:18). He is the foundation of the church: *"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ"* (1 Cor. 3:11). Christ is also the purchaser of the church: *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood"* (Acts 20:28). It is obvious that the church of the Lord Jesus which is described in the Bible is truly unique. No religious organization started by men can compare to it!

WHERE IS SALVATION? WHERE MUST ONE BE IN ORDER TO RECEIVE IT?

Redemption is in Christ: *"...and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son; In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins"* (Col. 1:13,14). In 2 Timothy 2:10, Paul declared that salvation is in Christ, writing, *"Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."* Only in Christ Jesus are all spiritual blessings found (Eph. 1:3). Only in Him can one be a new creation: *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* (2 Cor. 5:17). We are further promised: *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus"* (Rom. 8:1). From these passages it is obvious that in order to receive the remission of sins and be pleasing to God, one must be in Christ. Salvation is in Him and no other.

If salvation is only through Christ (John 14:6), and one must be in Christ in order to be saved, then the question for which we must find the answer is: what must one do in order to enter Christ? A person is

saved by faith, but not by faith only (Acts 10:43; James 2:24). Repentance and confession of Jesus as the Son of God are also conditions of salvation (Acts 3:19; Rom. 10:10), but if one has already believed, repented, and confessed Jesus, he is still out of Christ and is not saved if he has not yet been baptized for the remission of sins. Why? Because it is through water baptism that one enters Christ. There is no other means to get into Christ where salvation is located. *"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"* (Rom. 6:3,4). When did these Christians in Rome get into Christ? When they were baptized into Him. Only after their baptism did they begin to walk in "newness of life." The Holy Spirit further shows that one must be baptized in order to enter Christ with these words: *"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ"* (Gal. 3:27).

Most denominational groups of our time teach that water baptism is not a condition of salvation. In contrast to this false idea, we read in the Bible that in the first century people who were not saved were commanded to be baptized in order to have their sins washed away. *"And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord"* (Acts 22:16). This same truth is taught in Acts 2:38 *"...repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sin...."* It is sad that some in the church are denying this and supporting heresy. One brother who preaches told us that one is saved when he repents and makes a covenant with God, even if this takes place before baptism. I don't remember reading that any place in the New Testament, do you? Men can claim as many times as they desire that one is saved before baptism, but that does not change the plain teaching of the New Testament that one can be saved only in Christ, and one can enter Christ only through water baptism!

Just how is the topic of salvation

related to the church and the question of being saved in a denomination? Let us turn our attention to the Scriptures.

It is a fact that Jesus gave Himself for the church. For which church? For His own. *"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it"* (Eph. 5:25). We further read, *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood"* (Acts 20:28). Is the church important? Some men may not consider it as important, but it must be extremely important in the Lord's eyes! Why do we say so? Because Jesus left heaven and came to earth and bought the church with His own blood. Why would He do that if His church is not important to Him?

Jesus is the Savior of the body, the church — *"...even as Christ is the head of the church, and he is the saviour of the body"* (Eph. 5:23). Of what is Jesus the Savior? His spiritual body, the church (Eph. 1:22,23). Yes, on the one hand God the Father *"sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world"* (1 John 4:14). By God's grace Jesus tasted of death *"for every man"* (Heb. 2:9), and thus gave every person in the world the possibility to be saved through His blood. But the reality is that only those who are in Jesus' body, His church, can truthfully claim that Jesus' blood has washed away their sins. Why is this so? Because the Bible says that Jesus *"is the saviour of the body"* (Eph. 5:23).

It is also written that *"the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved"* (Acts 2:47). To what did the Lord add saved people? To the church. To which church? To the Lord's own church, the only church about which we read in the Bible. After the establishment of that church, all people who received salvation were in it. But did we not already state that salvation is in Christ? Yes. However, this is not a contradiction, for to be in Christ and to be in His church are one and the same. Colossians 1:13,14 proves this to be so: *"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his*

dear Son. In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Verse 13 declares that the saints in Colosse had been translated into something. Into what? Into the kingdom of God's Son, Jesus. But the next statement declares "in whom," that is, in Christ, we have redemption. Just where were the Colossian Christians located? They were both "in Christ" and "in His kingdom." The two expressions are synonyms. One cannot be in Christ without being in His kingdom (church), and one cannot be in Christ's kingdom (church) without being in Him.

When one is baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27), he is at the same time baptized into the kingdom of Christ (His church). That is not two different baptisms, but one baptism that puts one both into Christ and His body. Jesus declared, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). The book of Acts shows beyond doubt that the "water" of which one must be born in order to be saved is the water in which one is immersed during baptism (see clear teaching and examples of this in Acts 2:38; 8:35-39; 10:47,48; 22:16). Furthermore, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body..." (1 Cor. 12:13). The body into which one is baptized is the church (Col. 1:18,24). The baptism that puts one into the body or church is not Holy Spirit baptism (like the apostles received on the day of Pentecost), but water baptism which one receives as a result of hearing and accepting the Holy Spirit's teaching that He gives us in the Gospel. Again, the point is that water baptism puts us both into Christ and into His church. Further, we read: "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father..." (1 Cor. 15:24). What will Jesus do in the end? Deliver up the kingdom to God, the Father. What kingdom will He deliver to Him? The kingdom of Christ, the church (Col. 1:13,14). Therefore, if one wants to be safely delivered into the hands of the Heavenly Father, he must be in Jesus' kingdom. Regardless of what any person might think about it, the New Testament's teaching is plain: there is no redemption outside of

Christ and His church.

A CONTRAST BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND DENOMINATIONS

When we say "the church," we mean the church of Christ of which we read in the Bible, and of which Jesus is the builder, head and redeemer. The word "denomination" means a part of the whole. When we use this term in the religious sphere, we have reference to a religious group that believes in Jesus as the Son of God, and such a group considers itself as a part of the universal body of Christ, but not the complete body. Usually a denomination will have fellowship with other denominations, and consider the members of other denominations as Christians or the children of God.

Please note some differences between the Lord's church and denominations: 1) The Lord's church is part of "the eternal purpose" that God purposed in Christ Jesus before the beginning of the world (Eph. 3:6,9-11). That means that Jehovah planned His church even before He created the world. On the other hand, every denomination that is in existence was planned by men.

2) The prophets of the Old Testament prophesied of the establishment of the church of God, calling it "the house of God" (Isa. 2:23; Micah 4:1,2) and the "kingdom" that the Lord Himself would set up (Daniel 2:44). Denominations are not mentioned in any Old Testament prophecy, neither are they mentioned in the New Testament.

3) Jesus promised to build His church, saying, "And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church..." (Matt. 16:18). The Lord did not promise to build any denomination.

4) The church of Christ belongs to Christ, for He called it "my church" (Matt. 16:18). Denominations belong not to the Lord Jesus, but to men.

5) Jesus bought the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). Denominations are not connected with this purchase.

6) Jesus is the head of His church (Eph. 1:22,23; 5:23). However there is nothing said in the Bible about Him being the head of any denomination or organization that

men planned and established.

7) Jesus is the savior of His spiritual body (Eph. 5:23). Denominations are not part of that body.

8) In the end, Jesus will deliver up His church (kingdom) to the Heavenly Father (1 Cor. 15:24). In contrast to that we read the following of any religious group, including denominations, that belongs not to the Lord: "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matt. 15:13).

The existence of denominations ("denominationalism") is against the Lord's will. Denominations are out of place because they do not have the right from God to exist. Consider Jesus' question to the Jewish leaders of His day: "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men" (Matt. 21:25). There were only two possibilities: either the baptism practiced by John was from heaven, and thus authorized by God, or else it was from men, and in that case John had no authority to baptize. What about denominations? Either they are from heaven, or from men. If they are from heaven, then they are from God. If I claim that they are from God and He authorizes their existence, then I must be able to prove this from the Bible. But it cannot be done! No one can prove that the New Testament of Christ authorizes the existence of man-made religious groups, including denominations. Thus, their authority to exist came not from the Lord, but from men. Their existence is thus sinful, because it is not part of that which Jesus commanded His apostles ("Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you," Matt. 28:20). We are to speak "as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11). Since denominations are not part of the Lord's message for man's salvation, then they have no right to exist.

The existence of denominations contradicts the desire that Jesus expressed in His prayer to the Father that is recorded in John 17:20-23: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou

gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one...." It is obvious that the theme of these verses is unity. Jesus' prayer is that those who believe on Him through the words of the apostles would be one or united. It is no secret that the existence of multitudes of different denominations that wear different names and teach contradictory doctrines does not attract people to Christ and His word, but just the opposite. The common denominational plea that "any church is acceptable to God," or that "one church is as good as any other" causes confusion, and is far from the unity for which Jesus prayed in John 17. The unity for which Jesus prayed can be obtained, but not by forming and supporting denominations. How can those who believe in Jesus have true unity? Only by completely walking in the light of God's word, meaning to abide in Jesus' teaching by keeping His commands, can true spiritual unity exist.

The truth is, denominations are really in competition with the church of the Lord. What do denominations do? Do they encourage people to become members of the church of Christ? No. They do not want people to become members of the Lord's church because they want them to become members of their own denomination. This is not the Lord's will! Just why do denominations exist? Consider these questions that we might ask a friend from a denomination: 1) In order to be saved, is it necessary to become a member of your denomination?; 2) In order to become a Christian, is it necessary to become a member of your denomination?; 3) In order to go to heaven, is it necessary to become a member of your denomination? If the answer to each of these questions is "no" (and usually our denominational friends will admit that one can be saved, be a Christian, and go to heaven without being in their particular denomination), then our next question has to be: then why does your denomination exist? The church of the living God is essential to man's salvation, but denominations are not.

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IS ONE CHURCH AS GOOD AS ANOTHER?

The words "attend the church of your choice" greet readers searching for churches who advertise in newspapers. If it is true that one church is as good as another then it is also true that one may confidently attend the church of his choice. Let us now search the Scriptures and see if they shed any light on the subject.

Is one founder as good as another? Jesus promised He would *build* his church (Matt. 16:18). Christ, and not a man nor a group of men, is the founder of His church. The apostle Paul affirms this truth by saying, "*For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ*" (1 Cor. 3:11).

Think of all the different foundations that have been laid by religious groups. Will one accuse the Christ of laying different foundations? Our Lord is neither the author of division (1 Cor. 1:10-13) nor confusion (1 Cor. 14:33). Christ has made it clear that "*every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up*" (Matt. 15:13). If one founder is as good as another then one can confidently attend the church of his choice!

Is the shedding of any person's blood as good as the shedding of the blood of Christ? The church that Jesus promised to build was purchased by the shedding of His blood. The Lord's church was not purchased by the blood of "bulls and goats" (Heb. 10:4) or by the blood of any human being! In Acts 20:28, Paul reminds the Ephesian elders that they are to "*feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood.*"

Who will presumptuously proclaim that his shed blood purchased the church of our Lord? Who will arrogantly boast that his blood can cleanse one of his sins? If it is true that anyone's blood can be shed for our sins, the shedding of Christ's blood was unnecessary.

Is Christ the only head of the church or is one head as good as another? Do those who attend man-

made denominations really believe that Christ is the head of a church that a man or woman founded? Christ is only the head of **His church** "*which is his body*" (Eph. 1:22-23). How many "heads" are there? Only one — Christ! How many bodies should exist if there is only one head? Only one! The apostle Paul affirms such in saying, "*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all*" (Eph. 4:4-6).

Do folks who **claim** to believe God's word really believe it? The prophet Jeremiah taught, "*O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*" (Jer. 10:23). The wise man stated, "*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; But the end thereof are the ways of death*" (Prov. 14:12). Do folks really believe that Christ can be the head of a church that man has founded? Do people have good reason for believing that the one head (Christ) has spawned hundreds of different religious groups? No, the Bible does not so teach, thus, one church is not as good as another.

Is one kind of worship as good as another? The reason for different churches is to accommodate different kinds of worship! Can you tell me why a "Baptist" is not a "Methodist," or why a "Presbyterian" is not a "Catholic?" It is precisely because each has a different **kind** of worship that attracts those who desire to worship (?) in such a manner.

Jesus said, "*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth*" (John 4:24). Is truth that which comes from man or that which comes from God? The Bible says, "*Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth*" (John 17:17). If people do not engage in **true worship**, the worship they enter into is "*vain worship*" (Matt. 15:9). If one **kind** of worship was as

good as another, then one church might be as good as another. The Bible, however, does not so teach.

Instead of the church of **your** choice or **my** choice, we must attend the church of God's choice! God gave His Son to die for and establish **the** church — not **a** church, **some** church, or **any** church! Let the Bible be your guide and you will not be a member of some man-made denomination.

No, one church is not as good as another. Such is the devil's doctrine — not God's.

*Marvin L. Weir
5810 Liberty Grove Road
Rowlett, TX*

. . . .

HERMENEUTICS APPLIED TO A STOP SIGN

1. A serious and educated Catholic rolls through the intersection because he believes he cannot understand the stop sign apart from its interpretive community and tradition. Observing that the interpretive community doesn't take it too seriously, he doesn't feel obligated to take it too seriously either.

2. Average Catholics and mainline denominationalists don't bother to read the sign, but will stop if the car in front does.

3. A fundamentalist, taking the text very literally, stops at the stop sign and waits for it to tell him to go.

4. An orthodox Jew takes routes devoid of stops to eliminate the risk of disobeying the Law.

5. A scholar from the Jesus Seminar concludes that the passage "STOP" was never uttered by Jesus, since he would not stifle peoples' progress. So, STOP is a textual insertion from stage III of the gospel tradition, when the church was first confronted by traffic in its parking lot.

6. A New Testament scholar notices that there is no stop sign on Mark street but there is one on Matthew and Luke streets, and concludes that the ones on Luke and Matthew streets are both copied from a sign on a street no one has ever seen called "Q" street. Extensive research has been done on the differences between stop signs on Matthew and Luke streets, but nothing to explain the meaning of the text.

7. An Old Testament scholar points out that there are a number of stylistic differences between the first and second half of the STOP. The "ST" contains no enclosed areas and five line endings, whereas "OP" contains two enclosed areas and only one line termination. He concludes that the author for the second part is different from the author on the first part and probably lived hundreds of years later. Other schol-

OAK HILLS CHURCH OF CHRIST AND MAX LUCADO

Jerry D. McDonald submitted the following. Here is a post I received this evening from the Elders where Max Lucado preaches and also some words from Nathan Flynt.

Greetings from Lackland Terrace. I just wanted to make you aware of a situation in San Antonio, specifically at one of the churches here. In the worship bulletin for the **Oak Hills Church of Christ (Max Lucado, pulpit minister)** on September 5, 1999, (when their guest speaker was Buckner Fanning, of the Trinity Baptist Church in San Antonio) the following was printed:

"AN ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE ELDERS

The elders want to provide you with a statement about a question that may have been raised. That question has to do with the use of musical instruments in our worship. After many months of careful study and consideration, the elders unanimously concluded that there is no Biblical prohibition of the use of mechanical instruments in worship. We recognize the issue as a matter of diverse opinion and feel that any discussion in the future should be conducted in a manner that avoids division. We merely want to state that consensus to you today without any prediction of what that might mean to our worship services. Our worship style may or may not change, but we are in no hurry to change. We are highly sensitive to your feelings, and we want to hear your thoughts and wishes. Talk to your elders about it. Your feedback will help us as we intend to offer teaching on this matter. We are insistent on allowing God, through our prayers, to lead us in all aspects of our church family.

—The Elders."

The Oak Hills church has already had a weekly service (Wednesday night) which uses an instrumental praise team. It is my feeling that we, as a brotherhood of believers in the word of God, need to pray earnestly for the membership of this congregation (there were 2671 listed in this same bulletin as having attended the Sunday services on 8/29) and their elders. The Oak Hills eldership have been invited to give an account of their studies and conclusions at various times and have not yet chosen to do so.

—Nathan Flynt

ars determine that the second half is itself actually written by two separate authors because of similar stylistic differences between the "O" and the "P."

8. Yet another Old Testament scholar amends the text, changing the "T" to "H." The resulting SHOP is much easier to understand in context than "STOP" because of the multiplicity of stores in the area. The textual corruption is easily explained as a form geschichte alteration. Thus, the sign announces the existence of a

shopping area. If this is true, it could indicate that both meanings are valid, thus making the message "STOP & SHOP."

9. A "prophetic" preacher notices that the square root of the sum of the numeric representations of the letters S-T-O-P — (sigma-tau-omicron-pi — in Greek), multiplied by 40 (the number of testing), and divided by 4 (the four corners) equals 666, the dreaded "mark of the beast." All STOPS are therefore satanic.

—Author Unknown

MAIL BAG



SEEK THE OLD PATHS

the Lord's church strong. It needs all the help it can get in these trying times" ...**Bill and Sue Birchmore, Atlanta, GA.** "We are at present standing up against the use of hand clapping and standing up and clapping hands during the singing in worship. Please pray for us as we fight for the purity of worship and the consistency in the teaching of God's word throughout the brotherhood" ...**Harry A. Collins, Jr., Gainesville, FL.** "Keep up the good work" ...**Ken Chumbley, Frankfort, KY.** "I have heard many wonderful things about the publication that you put out, and was wondering if I could get on the mailing list to receive it? If there is a charge I would be happy to pay, just let me know" ...**Dustin Brock, Jacksonville, AL.** [There is no charge.] "Thank you for the great work that you do in all things. God Speed!" ...**Terry Kelton, Tompkinsville, KY.** "We enjoy this paper. It keeps us up on what is going on in the brotherhood. Where we attended it is getting really bad. We had two elders, if you want to call them that, who are just tearing the church apart. Where we have attended for over 40 years is something else now, so please pray for the church there. Thank you very much. More people need to know what is happening. Preachers come in and are very sneaky about things until they get people pulled in with them" ...**MI.** "Hello brethren. I want to thank you for your love for the Lord. I have had the pleasure of receiving *Seek The Old Paths* for a couple years now. I am writing on behalf of a brother in Christ who is currently incarcerated, but has since turned his life over to Christ. I have been a pen pal to him for about a year now and am encouraged by his love for God. I know that he would be blessed to receive your outstanding publication each month, and it could be another source of encouragement to him" ...**Michael Fehmer, Austin, TX.** "Just thought I would drop you a line thanking you for a good publication" ...**Ben Porter, Davison, MI.** "Thank you for your fine explanation with use of scripture. This is a good work you do for the Lord" ...**Ronald Smith.** "I'm a member of the Northern Lights Church of Christ located in Fairbanks, Alaska. I've been reading your publication *Seek The Old Paths* and have enjoyed it very much. Also, concerning some of the issues and problems within the body, I see much the same thing going on within the churches of Christ in Alaska. Recently the Kenai Church of Christ changed to a "fellowship" inviting any and all denominational attendance. How very sad, we are truly engaged in spiritual warfare and the lines are drawn in the sand. Your efforts in this area are greatly appreciated. God bless, and once again, thank you for the vital work you are doing" ...**Ed Burger, North Pole, AK.** "Dear Sirs, I have read your articles on paper and the internet and I appreciate the fine job that you do. I would greatly appreciate your assistance in a matter concerning **F. LaGard Smith.** I know that he is a false teacher. He is to speak at **International Bible College** at the end of this month. I have e-mailed them twice concerning this matter, but they will not respond to me. I think they will listen to you. Maybe they do not take a woman seriously. I hate to see this good bible college follow down the wrong path like so many of our Church of Christ schools. I attend the East Walker Church of Christ in Sumiton, Alabama. We send money each month to a man at IBC. I can not go along with this as long as they have false teachers in to speak. I'm sure that you could show them the man's errors better than I can. I appreciate your help. In Christian Love, **Rhoda Doss.** [NOTE: I appreciate your good letter. I share your concern also. IBC has not been on the cutting edge of soundness for many years. They continually invite such men for their programs year after year. Many have tried to show them and warn them, but to no avail. I'm sadden to say, but they have already gone the way of so many other schools. They are not a sound school and have not been for many years.] "Thank you for your web site and for the section on "Why be a member of the Church of Christ." I am in a study with a co-worker and was looking for just that type of information. I do not want to overwhelm him but will be using your page in our study. I attend the Wood Ave Church of Christ in Florence AL. Thank you again" ...**James Senn, Florence, AL.** "Just recently a friend of mine gave me a few copies of your publication *Seek The Old Paths.*" I have read and really

"I would like to be added to your mailing list to receive *Seek The Old Paths* by mail. I am interested in keeping up with the false teachers and the liberals that have gotten into the church. Thanks and God bless your work" ...**Shane Murphy, Killen, AL.** "Please keep up the good work and help keep

enjoy them. And would ask that you put me on your mailing list. Today, I got on the internet and looked up your site. I appreciate the work that you are doing and think you should be commended. I am a young preacher (27 yrs. old) and have been preaching at a small congregation in Binger, OK. I am desperately trying to stick to The Word while I watch others go away from Scripture. I hope to be a good influence on some, but have watched many turn away and forget God's word in light of their own wisdom. And I know the dangers of the same happening to me. Too many things get in the way of the truth in many peoples' lives these days. I rejoice to know that you are presenting the word and letting nothing get in the way. I also am glad to see you answering questions and offering Bible responses to false teachers. My request is if you could send enough copies of this publication to me for the church members to take home with them and read. This is only if you have enough resources to do this. In any case, I would really like to receive *Seek The Old Paths* for myself, and you can rest assured that I would share with any who were interested. Thank you for your valuable time, I know that you are busy doing the Lord's work and encourage you to keep on" ...**Daniel Tate, Binger, OK.** "My need is for some 12 to 20 copies of the September issue. I think the September issue of STOP would be good medicine for the congregation" ...**Verne Ragle, Ackerly, TX.** "I thought that maybe you would like to know about this. **Otis Gatewood** passed away on 9-16-99. Keep up the good work with your paper. It has helped up here having them. I know of at least a couple of people that I asked that you send them to who have really grown by them. One family has left a liberal congregation that they were members of for years. So I know you might not hear about it but you are doing a good work. Thanks again" ...**Ben Porter, Davison, MI.** "Rochester College lectureship comes soon. Two of the speakers are **Ian Fair** of **Abilene Christian University** and **Rubel Shelly.** May our Father watch over you and your loved ones as you stand up for Jesus" ...**L Douglas La Course, Sarnia, Ontario, Canada.**

Seek The Old Paths is a monthly publication of the **East Corinth Church of Christ** and is under the oversight of its elders. It is mailed FREE upon request. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3; II Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:13; Titus 2:1; II Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless otherwise noted. Articles are also welcomed.

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