

The Church, Her Bulwarks and Her Palaces #2

by Danny Brown

8. *There was a well-defined law of admission into the church:* “He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.” (John 10:1) There are conditions that must be fulfilled in order to be a member of the body of Christ: **1. Faith:** “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Heb 11:6) “I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins. (John 8:24) **2. Repentance:** “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:” (Acts 17:30) **3. Confess Christ:** That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” (Rom 10:9-10) **4. Baptism for Remission of Sins:** “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved:” (Mark 15:16) “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 2:38)

“The perfect law of liberty” (Jas 1:25) demands of those who desire to enter the church, faith in Christ and obedience (repentance, confession and baptism) to His demands. The same conditions which are necessary for salvation are the same conditions to be fulfilled to become a member of the church. One does not join the church, he is added to the church by Christ when he is saved. “Praising God, and having favour with all the people, And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” (Acts 2:47) Since the Lord adds the saved to the church (and he doesn’t make any mistakes) all the saved are in the church. Every denomination in modern times has a law of admission peculiar to itself. These denominations do not believe each other’s creeds, recognize each other’s members or meet together and worship the Lord in peace and harmony. Yet they profess to recognize each other as Christians and many of them profess to belong to “branches of the same church.” The church you read about in the Bible does not have branches it is one body. It is safe to affirm that a denomination that has a law of admission unknown to the New Testament is not the church of Christ.

9. *The church we read about in the Bible is not a denomination.* “And hath put all thing under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church. Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.” (Eph 1:22-23) The church is one body, the body of Christ, of which he is the head and it is the fullness of Christ. It is not a denomination. The term “denomination” has been described as “a collection of churches called by the same name. For example, one Baptist Church does not make the Baptist Denomination, it takes all of them. The central machinery the collectivity used is the denominational machinery. Whenever you form any collectivity of churches called by the same name that they may use some central means of accomplishing work, the means is the machinery for the denomination and every local church in that collectivity is a part of that denomination or collection of churches called by the same name. God did not see fit to form the “Churches of Christ” into any kind of a collection but each church is a complete unit and not a part of anything.” – David Bonner

The church has no denominational name, no denominational creed, no denominational organization, no denominational alliances; it is not a denomination. Any institution that is a part of a collectivity wearing a denominational name, subscribing to a denominational creed with a denominational organization is not the church of Christ we read about that existed in the first century.

10. *The followers of Christ were distinguished by a divinely-given name:* “The Gentiles shall see thy righteousness and all kings thy glory; and thou shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name.” (Isaiah 62:2) Soon after the Gentiles were brought into the kingdom of Christ, Luke informs us that “the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” (Acts 11:26) “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.” (Acts 26:28) “Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf (literally in this name)” (1 Pet 4:16). “Do they not blaspheme that worthy name by which ye are called.” (James 2:7) “And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name.” (Isa 65:15) In the face of Bible testimony, we are told that there is nothing in a name. Is there anything in the great names of history? What name is sufficient to awaken the deepest emotions in every believer’s heart? The name of Paul the apostle! What name rekindles the fires of patriotism in the heart of every true American? The name of George Washington! To what name will all the nations of the earth and the angels in heaven bow in humble reverence?” The name of our Lord Jesus Christ! (Phil 2:10)

There is something in the names of men held in high esteem by the denominations of modern times. Names such as John Wesley, Martin Luther, John Knox, John Calvin, etc. However the name of Christ – Christian – is the grandest name known among the children of men. It identifies those who wear it without any explanation. Not so with denominational names. They imply historical associations that most of mankind knows little about. Paul informs us that Christians are married to Christ (Rom 7:4). Brides, to be respected, must wear their husband’s name. When the same apostle wrote to the church at Ephesus, in the year 64 A.D., he informed them that the “whole family in heaven and in earth” recognized and honored the name of Christ. True, the followers of Christ, in primitive times, were known as disciples, saints, or brethren, but the term Christian embraces all of these. At the roll-call of eternity we will be judged as to whether or not we were a Christian, a follower of the Lamb.”

“The churches of Christ salute you.” (Rom 16:16) Paul sent his salutations to the saints at Rome from the churches of Christ. He gave Christ the glory. This is in harmony with all Divine revelation. He is the founder, foundation, head and life of this institution, hence it should wear His name. He purchased it. (Eph 5:25) Do not endeavor to rob Him of His well-deserved honor!

We can unite on the name Christian, for it expresses our highest conception of what every man desires to be, but we can never unite on any human name. If a man is a Christian, why should he hide his light under a bushel of human titles or names? Let him look to Christ and wear the name that honors Him.

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