

(Matthew 16:18), He certainly planned to build only one. When the Lord added the saved to the Church (Acts 2:47), only one Church was added to. Since Christ purchased the Church with His own blood (Acts 20:28), and since He loved the Church and gave Himself up for it (Ephesians 5:25), it is quite clear that only one Church existed in New Testament times. Never are “kinds” of churches mentioned. Never in the Bible do we read of “different” churches, teaching different doctrines.

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*You can*  
**BE JUST  
A CHRISTIAN**

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If I should come to your door with a new car, you would likely ask, “What kind?” Suppose I said, “No kind, just a car!” You would not believe me, since there are no cars today which are not “kinds” of cars.

Our thinking is the same way about churches. If I say that I am a Christian, you immediately ask, “What kind?” You cannot imagine a Christian who is not some “kind” of Christian. You cannot conceive of “the Church” except as some “kind of church.”

We have all grown up in a world full of churches. We did not start them, we did not cause them, we did not want them. We simply inherited them. Exactly as we think of cars, we think there are not churches except “kinds of churches.”

But the original car, the very first one, was not any “kind” of car. It was just a car “the” car. People then did not think of “kinds” of cars there were no kinds. There was just “the original and only car.”

Since that original car many kinds of cars have been built. Our world today is full of “kinds” of car. In fact, we cannot even think of a car, without thinking of a “kind”. But the first car was not any “kind”.

You can be just a Christian exactly like the original Christians not any “kind” just a Christian. You can be in the Church the original Church not any “kind” of church just the Church.

Would you continue this little booklet and be convinced

that “you can be just a Christian?”

### **Was original Christianity denominational?**

Since we have all grown up in a world of denominational churches, it is hard to think of the undivided Church of the first century. Just because a condition of division exists today does not mean that it originally did in the Church. Paul said that though men called the Church a “sect” in his day, yet after that way he served the God of his fathers, (Acts 24:14). The gospel was preached in Jerusalem in Acts 2. Three thousand Jews became

Christians (v. 14), and the Lord added them to the Church (v.17). Becoming a Christian in the first century by the same act, added one to the Church. The original Church was simple, Christians. Christianity and the Church were the same.

In Antioch the Lord Jesus was preached (Acts 11:20). A great number believed and turned to the Lord (v.21). They were thus added to the Lord (v.24). These people added to the Lord were called “disciples,” “Christians” and “the Church” (v.26). There were not any “kind” of Christians just Christians. They were not in any “kind” of church just the Church.

People in Corinth heard, believed, and were baptised (Acts 18:8). Paul wrote to them as “the Church of God at Corinth” (1Corinthians1:12). He told them all to teach (or speak) the same thing and to have no division among them (1 Corinthians1:10). He said that God is not the author of confusion but of peace (1 Corinthians 14:33).

### **Can one be just a Christian?**

The first Christians were Christians only. They were members of the one Church (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 4:4; Colosians 1:18), but of no denomination. By being members of the one Church, and of no denomination, they respected Christ's prayer (John 17:20-21), and the plea of Paul (1 Corinthians 1:10).

Can we too, be just Christians, as they were? Must we be members of denominations in order to obey Christ and be saved? Paul, Philip, Aquila and others heard the gospel, believed it, repented of their sins, confessed Jesus Christ as God's Son, and were immersed into the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit (which is the name of the Lord Jesus Christ), for the remission of their sins (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:38). As a result, the Lord added them to His Church, the one Church (Acts 2:47).

Thousands, perhaps millions, were saved and added to Christ's Church long before the oldest denomination was founded. Certainly, therefore, one may be a Christian only, or be a Christian without being a member of any denomination. All such Christians can meet and work together, becoming thus the simple Church of Christ like those spoken of and described in the New Testament (Romans 16:16). If we continue in the New Testament doctrine and practice, we will be undenominational. And if we do these divine things avoiding human things in religion, we will please the Father and Christ the Head of the Church.

### **Is the Church of Christ a denomination?**

The following reasons are given to show that the Church of Christ is not a denomination but rather is altogether unlike the many different denominations in the true sense of the term denomination. The Church of Christ is not a denomination because:

1. The Church of Jesus Christ in the Bible was not a division of anyone. Jesus built one Church (Matthew 16:18) and prayed that all His followers be one (John 17:21). The word of Christ does not bring division among believers (1 Corinthians 1:10-13), and every Christian must strive diligently for unity in the one body or Church (Ephesians 4:3-6). Since a denomination is a division, the Lord's Church is not a denomination because it is not a division but rather opposes division.
2. Just because men may call the Church a division or sect does not make it one. In Acts 24:5, the apostle Paul was called by his enemies a ringleader of a Jewish sect. When Paul defended himself he referred to the Church as "the Way which they call heresy or sect" (Acts 24:14). But this did not mean that Paul was a member of a heresy or sect. He continued by saying that the Way or group which men were calling a sect was really the way of God and no heresy or sect at all. In like manner, the Church of Christ today may be everywhere called a denomination, but this does not mean that it is a denomination and calling the Church a denomination does not make it one.
3. Since a denomination is a group with a designated name to separate it from other divisions, this becomes another reason why the Church is not a

denomination. There is no single name for the Church in the Bible. It was called simply “the Church” (Matthew 16:18), it was most often called simply “the Church” (Acts 2:47), it was referred to as “the Church of God” (1Corinthians 1:2), “the Church of the living God” (1 Timothy 3:15), and by many other descriptions and names. Congregations of the Lord’s Church were called “churches of Christ” (Romans 16:16). The Church, in a special way, did belong to Christ as its Builder, Purchaser, Owner and Head. But even the term “Church of Christ” was not the very name or the only name of the Church. The Lord’s Church has no name.

4. Another important reason why the Church is not a denomination is that men and women can be Christians and members of the Church of the Lord without being in any denomination. There were no denominations in the Bible. Most of them began 1600 years after Jesus built His Church.

#### **Why do those who claim to follow Christ wear different names?**

The many different religious names worn today by those who claim to follow Christ have been chosen because of the influence of leaders or denominations with which people desire to be identified. Many of these men and movements represent a desire to establish a purer form of Christianity than that represented by apostate churches. But none of them can take the place of the Lord whom Christians serve, or the one body, which is His Church (Colossians 1:18).

Truly great men in the history of Christianity have felt as

Martin Luther, who said, “I pray you leave me alone and call not yourselves Lutherans, but Christians. Who is Luther? My doctrine is not mine. I have not been crucified for anyone....” (Despite his plea, a well-known denomination wears his name)!

We should wear only the name of Him who was crucified for us. *“There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12). *“Yet if any man suffer as a Christian let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf (in this name)”* (1Peter 4:16).

#### **What does the word “CHURCH” mean?**

Our careless use of the word “church” causes confusion in our concept of Christianity. Many may mean a building, others may mean a denomination, or some may mean all denominations are the Church. The original Greek word for “church” always means a “called out” group of people. Acts 7:38 describes the “church” in the wilderness” These were Jewish people “called out” of Egypt. Saul of Tarsus persecuted the “church” in Acts 8:1-3 when he dragged “men and women” to prison. The Church is “called out” people. Therefore, whenever anyone is “called out” of sin by becoming a Christian, he is automatically in the Church, the called out group of Christians. No one in the Bible ever “joined” the Church. The Lord adds the saved to the Church at the moment they become saved (Acts 2:47).

**The “called out” people in a certain city are a local Church. The Church in Corinth, the Church in Philippi, the Church in Ephesus are a few of many local**

**Churches in the New Testament.** Far more than any other use of the word “Church”, local churches are most often meant in Scripture when we read the word “Church.” The Church is always “called out” people.

### **What other Bible terms describe the Church?**

Because first century people lived under kings, the church is called a kingdom. Like kings, who freed people from the oppression of other kings, God delivers us out of the power of darkness into the kingdom of Christ, (Colossians1:13). Never did first century people think of “your kingdom” or “my kingdom” with regard to the Church. There was only the dark kingdom of sin and the Kingdom of Christ, the Church. Submitting to King Jesus enables God to deliver us into the Kingdom.

The church is God's family over which He is the Father, (Matthew 6:9). The Church is called the “House” or Family of God (1 Timothy 3:15). Jesus said that a person is “born again” of “water and Spirit” to enter God's family or kingdom (John3:3,5). Paul says that we become children of God by faith, when we are baptised into Christ to put on Christ, (Galatians3:26,27). God's family is the Church, and being born again makes one a child in the family.

Three times the Church is called the “body” of Christ, (Ephesians 1:22-23 and Colossians1:18 and 1:24). Jesus is the “Head” and all Christians are “members” or organs in the spiritual body. It means that one enters Christ's body, the Church, at the point of baptism, since “into” means “from without to within.”

These and many other comparisons of the Church show

that membership in the original first century Church was enjoyed at the moment of becoming a Christian. They also show the oneness of the Church, since God has only one kingdom, one family, and Christ as Head has only one body, (Ephesians 4:4).

### **How did original Christianity become divided?**

**The Bible shows clearly how the Church in the New Testament became corrupted and splintered. The congregations in Galatia had men who troubled them by “perverting” the gospel of Christ, (Galatians1:7). To “pervert” is to corrupt by changing. The devil perverted God's statement to Adam and Eve: “Thou shalt surely die” by adding only one word: “thou shall not surely die” (Genesis 3:4). A perverted gospel message in Galatia necessarily perverted the Church. 2 Timothy 4:1-4, commands Timothy to preach the word because men would not endure sound doctrine but would turn their ears away from the truth to fables or foolish stories. It is the tendency of mankind to turn away from God's way to man's own way. When men turned away from the truth of God, necessarily the church was changed.**

Since it is the pillar and ground of the truth, (1 Timothy3:15)

1 Timothy 4:1-4, predicted that men would depart or fall away from the faith. Since Christianity was often called “The Faith” (Acts 6:7), the Scripture shows that other faiths would be originated when men departed from the one true faith. Though there is but one faith (Ephesians 4:5) men soon departed from it and brought other faiths, beliefs into the Church. Naturally when the faith was

departed from, the Church was departed from, since the Church is “the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10).

Romans 16:17, warns Christians in Rome to “mark” teachers who caused divisions and occasions of stumbling contrary to “the doctrine” which they had learned and to avoid them. This shows that the doctrine of Christ was soon corrupted. We must continue steadfastly in the “apostles' doctrine” (Acts 2:42). If we do not abide in the doctrine of Christ we do not have God, (2 John 9). But teachers in Rome and elsewhere soon brought divisions and stumbling by corrupting the doctrine of Christ.

### **What is a denomination and how did denominating begin?**

1 Corinthians 1:10-13, is a clear explanation of the beginning of denominationalism. After Paul had left Corinth, the people began to wear the names of their teachers: “I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas,” (v. 12). Paul asked: “Were ye baptised in the name of Paul?” (v. 13) He thanked God that he had only baptised two or so of them because his Name and the names of other preachers were causing divisions, (v. 15).

This is what denominating is. The word comes from “demeaning” “by” and “*nomin*” meaning “name” A denomination is a “named division” or a “division resulting from its name.” Denominations of a dollar are the name of its parts: cent, nickels, dimes, quarters and halves. The denominator of a fraction like  $\frac{1}{2}$  is the 2 which divided these fractions as “halves” from other fractions such as “thirds.”

Christians in Corinth were denominating themselves by wearing the names of the preachers who baptised them, thus dividing the church by “named divisions” or denominations. Paul demanded that “there be no divisions among you” (v. 10). Denominating divides Christ (v. 13) by dividing His spiritual body, the Church. Jesus prayed that His followers might all be one as He and God are one, (John 17:21).

Denomination is a bad word. Though we have grown up in a world which accepts it, it is unscriptural and sinful to denominate ourselves. The world thinks just “lust” is a good and popular word, but the Bible shows that it is a bad word. The application forms which we fill out will often ask, “What denomination?” As if to be a Christian required denominating, and as if the word were honourable.

The early church was soon denominated, but the apostles condemned the practice. They condemned name-wearing which divided Christians. The same Bible condemns denominating today. The names are different, but the sin is the same. Denominating is a sin which began very early in the Church. It has multiplied and become widely accepted today.

### **What are some Bible words for religious division?**

**In Acts 24:14, Paul said that way in which he served God was called a “sect” by men. Christianity was thought of as a sect and was everywhere spoken against, (Acts 28:22). “Sectarianism” is a bad word. It has been the cause of open warfare in Ireland. To be a**

12 “sectarian” is to be narrow-minded and divisive. Yet, this is a Bible word for denominating.

Another word is “heresy”. Heresies are called “damnable” in 2 Peter 2:1. A heresy is a religious division resulting from a strange teaching. It makes a person a heretic. Have you ever heard anyone say, “You have your heresy and I have mine?” Would we put on application forms, “What heresy are you a member of?” Yet, heresy is a Bible word for denominating and accurately gives its meaning.

A third word for denominating is “parties”. This is the American Standard Version reading of “heresies” in Galatians 5:20. It helps us to see the true nature of denominating. All Americans are American citizens, but not all are members of the American Citizens Party. The proper Bible concept of the Church is like American citizens, since all Christians are the Church. But the denomination concept of using some Bibles names to divide a group from all other Christians is a corruption which destroys unity.

Let us call Bible things by Bible names and do Bible things in Bible ways, “parties” are works of the flesh, (Galatians 5:20). “Heresies” are damnable, (2 Peter 2:1). “Sectarianism” is a misunderstanding of Christianity, (Acts 24:14 and 28:22). “Denominationalism” is condemned (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). But strangely this last word has traditionally become respectable and acceptable in our world.

**Is there an actual prediction that many would depart**

### **from the Church?**

13 Acts 20:28-30 is such a prophecy. Paul here warned elders from Ephesus to take heed to the Church which Christ purchased with His blood. He uses the figure of a flock. The flock here is clearly a metaphor for the Church, (v.28). They needed to take heed to the flock because something was to happen to the flock (or Church). In verse 29, Paul says that grievous wolves would scatter the flock, ( the Church). Those wolves were to be men speaking perverse, (perverted things, that is, teachers who would change the truth into error. This would draw away disciples after the false teachers. These groups of people would be drawn away from the flock, the Church. Thus would new churches begin by splintering the Church of the Lord (or Church of God, King James version). The Lord's Church was to be splintered and false churches begun. This would be caused by changes or perversions in teaching which led men away from the church of the Lord.

These things happened as Paul predicted. The flock was not spared; it was led away from; the Church of the Lord was departed from. Perverted teaching led men into perverted churches. The Church was departed from, like the gospel, like the truth, like the faith, like the doctrine, and like the unity, were departed from. And for the same reason, men depart from God's way.

### **Is all worship acceptable?**

Man is a worshipful being. Sooner or later he bows down in reverence if not before God, then before some kind of idol. But it is not enough just to worship; man must worship the true God in the true way. In Genesis chapter

four the first worship recorded in the Bible was of two types: vain and true. The worship performed by Cain was unacceptable, but the worship Abel offered was acceptable to God.

In like manner, every worshipping person since the days of Cain and Abel has worshipped either acceptably or unacceptably before God. The idol worshippers in Athens were practicing ignorant worship (Acts 17:23). They were ignorantly following their own wishes and feelings without considering God's instructions. This type of worship is practiced not only by pagans who worship idols, but also by educated and learned people as well. The people of Athens were highly educated, but they were told to repent of their ignorance of God's word (Acts 17:30).

People were in the Lord's Church in Bible times without being in denominations and the same can be true today. If we believe in only the very same Jesus which they did, and obey nothing other than the word of God which they did, we will be the same Christians and members of the same Church which they were.

To make this point clear to all, let us ask this question: What would you ask me to do to be a member of your denomination? You would surely answer with two requirements:

- I would have to desire or want to be in such a denomination, and
- I would have to meet the necessary entry requirements which would put me into the denomination. That is, to be in any denomination, I

would have to seek to be a member, and I would have to qualify to be a member. No denomination would grant membership without meeting these basic requirements.

But I do not want to be a member of any denomination. Rather I desire not to be a member of any denomination. I am not in any denomination because I have not met the simplest requirement of wanting or seeking to be a member. In the second place, I have never done anything which any denomination has asked me to do to qualify as a member. I have met the simple requirements of Jesus to make me a Christian, and He has by these Bible requirements added me to His Church. But I have never complied with the entrance requirements of any denominational church, and instead, I even refused to meet the membership regulations of any denomination.

Now how could anyone say that I am a member of a denomination? I have never wanted to be, and I have refused to take the necessary steps to be, in any and every denomination on earth. And yet I am a member of Jesus' Church as were those Christians in the New Testament because I have done, according to the Bible, what they did in order to be in the Church. And what I have done is what every one of you can do you can be just a Christian, a member of the Lord's Church, without being in any denomination.

Therefore, the Church of Christ is not a denominations because:

1. It is not a division, and denominations are divisions:
2. Calling a group a sect or division does not mean that



it actually is

3. The church has no designating and distinctive name, but rather wears all Bible names which every believer can wear, and
4. It is altogether possible for anyone to be in the Church while refusing to be in any and every denomination. Will you be just a Christian?

Today, we see hundreds of different denominational churches in competition with one another and even opposing one another. The presence of many denominations in the world today causes many people to think that there must have been sects or denominations in Bible days. But because, on the other hand, they see only one Church in the Bible, these people create certain imagination in their minds to try to find different denominations in the Scriptures.

**Some men say that the different denominations today are just “branches of the one church. But whoever saw a tree with so many different kinds of branches? What kind of plant could exist producing so many different kinds of fruits? Any? Why do we never read of any “branches” of the church in Bible?**

**Other men say that the many denominations are all parts of the “Universal” or “Invisible” Church. But why does the Bible never tell us of such a “church universal” made up of all denominations. How could its parts be so different and its branches fight one another and produce different fruits? Surely such unreasonable imaginations are not the teachings of the Bible. They are mere excuses of men, who try to justify things which are**

clearly contrary to the Scriptures.

There were no denominations in the Bible. Jesus did not build different kinds of churches. He would not have died to purchase various opposing branches of churches which bring forth differing and confusing fruits. These conditions have been caused by men, and consequently men have been forced to try to defend them.

#### **What can be done about this condition?**

Jude 3 gives the answer: “Contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints.” The faith was given once for all to Christians. But it must be contended for earnestly in all generations. “Error” means “straying away,” and men are prone to err from God’s way. Contending earnestly is turning from error back to the truth.

Because we have been born into a world of religious perversions, we must contend earnestly for the original faith. We must back up and hook on to Christianity such as it was before it was perverted. The original gospel must be restored in the place of perverted gospels, (Galatians 1:6-9). The original truth must be preached as before it was turned away from (2 Timothy 4:14). We must return to the original doctrine of Christ and the apostles before men corrupted it, (Romans 16:17). We must restore the original unity of the Church before denominating divided it, (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). We must restore the original Church of the Lord as it was before men were led away from it, ( Acts 20:28-30).

But this contending must be done earnestly (Jude 3). It

will not be easy to stem the tide of centuries of tradition. We all like to remain satisfied and settled in our inherited traditional ways. To restore original Christianity in a traditionbound world is a task needing the help of God; by Him alone it is possible. God would not have said to us to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, if this were not possible. Every command of God is possible. He never requires the impossible. But He often demands the difficult. I can either remain complacent and drift along in an inherited faith, or I can see what has happened, make a determined resolve, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Most of us will do the easiest.

There is one God, though our world says that there are many (1 Corinthians 8:5). It is not narrow-minded to take the Bible and show men the one true God. Neither is it egotistical to take the Bible and show men the one true Church the body of Christ. Unless I contend for the one true God of the Scripture, I cannot keep Holy Spirit unity. But I must also contend for one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one hope and one Church. Unless I do, I am not able to restore and keep Holy Spirit unity. I know that this is not narrow minded, because I am commanded to do it as the only basis of true unity.

#### **Is it not narrow minded to contend for one Church?**

Ephesians 4:3-7 says that it is not. Here Paul commands Christians to endeavour to keep the unity produced by the Holy Spirit. This means that the Spirit gave the early Church and in the original faith a unity which must be kept. Because our world has not kept the original unity given by the Spirit, we must endeavour to restore and

keep it. The passage says, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." We are then told what unity is. "There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God. The first thing Paul mentioned was one body. We are commanded to keep the unity of the Spirit by contending for one body. Earlier in the letter to the Ephesian Christians, Paul had said that the body was the Church, (Ephesians 1:22,23). We must keep the Spirit's unity by teaching one body or Church.

**This unity demands that there be one Spirit, the Holy Spirit. Though many false spirits are in the world, (1John 4:1). Christians know the one Spirit from Scripture and contend for this against all false spirits, though many people may follow them. Holy Spirit unity, though many people may follow them, demands one hope, not many. Instead of many roads to heaven there is one (Matthew 7 : 13, 14). There is one Lord, Jesus, though there are many called lords in our world (1Corinthians 6 :15). Jesus is the only true Lord. All others are false, and I must contend earnestly for the one true Lord of the Bible. I must contend for the unity. I must contend for the unity which is based upon one faith. Though the world popularly believes in many faiths, the one in the Bible is the only true one. I am not narrow-minded if I contend for the one faith of the Bible (Jude 3). There is one baptism, not several. Paul taught incorrectly-baptised men in Ephesus to be properly baptised (Acts 19:1-5). I must show my world the true baptism of the Bible which must replace the false baptism of men.**

### Were early Christians in one Church?

**An Ethiopian was convinced that Jesus died for his sins. He asked to be baptised immediately. He came up from the water rejoicing (Acts 8:32-39). Which church was he a member of? The Lord's Church which He Himself built (Matthew 16:18). A Philippian jailor was baptised after midnight because he believed Jesus was his sin-offering (Acts 16:31-34). What kind of Christian did this make him? No kind, just a Christian, or the Lord's kind, the only kind there is, were these newly born-again Christians in a denomination? If so, which one? Did they join a denomination after their conversion? No. Yet they were added by the Lord to the Church (Acts 2:47). They were delivered by God into the kingdom (Colossians 1:13). They were just Christians, members of the undenominational Church of Jesus Christ.**

Were these new Christians in the same Church? Yes. Were they the same kind of Christians? Yes. Did they have one faith? Yes. Why then cannot we be the same today? If we become what they were, then we'll be exactly what they were, nothing else. If they were only Christians, we can be only Christians members of the Church built and purchased by Jesus Christ.

I would not blame people for refusing to be in my church, if I had a church. No New Testament Christian ever wanted anyone to be in his church. No one then had a church, but Jesus had a Church which all Christians were in. This can and must be true today.

**What keeps men from understanding undenominational Christianity today?**

**Tradition!** What is handed down religiously from generation to generation! Inherited beliefs of parents and ancestors! The same was true in Jesus' day. The Jewish leaders were tradition-bound in their beliefs and practices. They honoured the religious traditions of their fathers (Galatians 1:14). Jesus told the Scribes and Pharisees that they transgressed the commandment of God by their tradition (Mark 15:3). He said that they made void the word of God by their tradition (v.6). He showed that they worshipped God in vain by teaching for doctrines the commandments of men (v. 9).

God's Ten Commandment said to honour or support one's parents (Exodus 20:12). These Jewish leaders had excused themselves from this command by giving a gift to God (Mark 7:11-12). Since their leaders taught this, many gullible people followed it. This is how religious tradition works.

God said one thing. The religious leader said a different thing, (Matthew 7:8), to reject the commandment of God (v.9), to make the word of God of none effect because of **their tradition (v.13). The leaders were blind leaders; they were the blind leading the blind. Jesus said that both would fall into the ditch (Matthew 15:14). All doctrines and commandments of men will perish (Colossians 2:22). They followed the commandments of men who turned away from the truth (Titus 1:14). Tradition in religion is tragic. It keeps men from understanding pure Christianity.**

**Were there denominations in the New Testament?**

When Jesus promised, "I will build my church"