

Plain Path

Weekly newsletter of the Fry Road church of Christ

Sunday, July 27, 2014

Volume 19, Number 30

“Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path... Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart” (Psalm 27:11-14)

WHAT IS A DENOMINATION?

by Bob Pulliam

What is a denomination? The answer to that question can vary quite a bit. And much of the diversity is based on what people want to make out of the word and the world we live in.

For example, I recently read a comment on a web page which cited a web dictionary as defining it as “a recognized autonomous branch of the Christian Church.” (from a Google search definition). And while it is true that the world is coming to use the term that way more and more, it still is not a totally accurate reflection of the word (although the words “branch of” gives this definition a dimension that the person citing it did not understand). The person who cited this definition was trying to prove that we are a denomination. Why? It makes denominationalism acceptable. We mustn't teach

against it because we are a part of it.

I don't know if the person making this comment was a member of the church, but there are plenty of members of the church who have also come to regard us this way. And the silly arguments used usually reflect a desperate effort to make denominationalism respectable. Why? Usually because we have friends out there in the world that we would rather leave to their churches, because we don't want to make waves. This tells me that we have drawn the conclusion that doctrine (teaching) is not really critical, and that the Bible is not the definitive guide we once took it to be. This also tells me where some church members have been carried by their conviction that the Holy Spirit is leading (by direct influence) them. These members

have been drifting away from the absolute standard of Scripture, preferring their own insights and intuitions (imagining that these are being directed by the Holy Spirit). I see this in churches advertising themselves as “Spirit filled churches” to the world. If you challenge them on that they will quickly cite a passage and say, “But we don't believe God is working miracles among us.” Not only does the passage they cite *not* say what they believe it to mean (I Cor 3:16), but **is taken to mean that by the world, and they know it!**

What is the result of this? A people (*i.e.* members of the church of Christ) who once were taught that a man's way is not in himself (Jer 10:17) are now looking for the way by reading uninspired authors and parroting their terminology. Grandparents who believed Solomon when he said that the way that seems right is death (Prov 14:12), are now learn-

(Denomination, *continued on pg 2...*)

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ing that their grandchildren trust their feelings to find spiritual life. Parents who taught their children that sincerity is not enough (Mt 7:21-23) are now discovering that their children are arguing doctrinal validity on the basis of sincerity (*viz.* “they’re sincere in their teachings, so they are children of God too”).

Society is taking its toll on the integrity of the church. That isn’t new. We can look back into history and see it. Even ancient Israel shows us how people love to be like the nations around them (I Sam 8:19f). Our friends exert an even greater power over our affections, and we look for ways to pacify, conciliate, and fit in. Since God says not to do so in His word, that word is the first thing

Satan must push aside (usually by a simple but thorough reinterpretation - *cf.* Gen 3:4f).

What Is a Denomination?

The word *denomination* (descending from the act of denominating) refers to the naming of something to classify it separately from an original, or standard of singularity. For example, cent, dime, and quarter are all denominations of one dollar, being 1/100, 1/10, and 1/4 of the whole. They all are money, but they are not the same. I once had a Baptist try to defend denominationalism on the basis of monetary denominations (I guess he thought pulling change out of his pocket would impress me). The problem with doing that is you do have an authority (the U.S. government) doing the one (making coinage); whereas the only authority (God) for doing the other (making religious denominations) condemns it (*e.g.* I Cor 1:10). Denominations exist because there is a need to identify them, keeping them separate from each other. But the naming also identifies them as different from the original. If they were the original, they would be satisfied with what first century Christians called the church in the first century. At times the church is referred to generally in Scripture, because there was nothing with which to confuse it (*e.g.* Acts 5:11; 8:1; 11:26). We never read these passages and wonder, “Which church is he talking about?” There was only one. Denominations exist where there is a departure from the original, necessitating a naming to distinguish it, and avoid confusion (although it never actually does).

Putting the name “church of Christ” on a sign does not make it a denomination. That was a name called forth in Scripture, giving glory to Jesus who died for it (Rom 16:16; Eph 5:23-25). The term “church of Christ” does not classify a church to keep it from being confused with the original (in the Bible). And it is a necessity in an age where many denominations call themselves “the church”, but are not. I am not denying that people can use that name in a denominational way. But doing so does not give one the right to choose other names to divide themselves from brethren. When they change the name on the sign, they become a part of the problem they condemn.

When we use the term to make us one of many ways, we have become a denomination. When we turn from Christ as our head, we cease to be the body of Christ, and are nothing more than a denomination. But when we call ourselves the “church of Christ” to be identified as that church you read about in the Bible, we have a horse of a different color. That some churches put that on the sign and don’t measure up is no argument for putting whatever you please on the sign.

I recently saw this derisive question: “What name did churches put on their signs in the book of Acts and in the epistles?” The implied answer desired is that they did not put up any signs. Really? Did they have signs? You’ve argued yourself into an area where we have no knowledge. Don’t be so naive as to think signs were invented in the 20th century. I don’t know what they had, but I do know what they were called when detail counted.

(Denomination, *continued on pg 3...*)

THIS WEEK'S DAILY BIBLE READINGS

NEW TESTAMENT READING

ACTS 13 - 16

July 27 - 29

OLD TESTAMENT READING

DEUTERONOMY 29 - 34

July 30 - August 2

I TIMOTHY 4:13

FAMILY NEWS & NOTES

*News and Notes of Interest
to Fry Road Members*

Because of the large number of visitors to our services, we would ask those wishing to identify with the congregation to do so by expressing this interest directly to the elders.

Upcoming Meetings & Events:

**Annual Singing
September 6, 2014**

**Gospel Meeting (Joseph Casimier)
September 7 - 10, 2014**

Sick and Shut-Ins

Sections have been removed to preserve members' privacy

Sermons:

Next Sunday:

If I Have Not Love
(part III)

Tonight:

Why Not Change
the Sign Out Front?

Ladies' Class

A special Ladies' Class will meet on the 17th and 24th of August before Sunday evening services (5:00 - 5:45 PM). The study will be on Two Remarkable Women of God (Rahab and Esther). If you can attend, please sign up on the sheet in the foyer. This will allow us to print up an adequate amount of class material.

(Denomination, *continued from pg 2...*)

Haven't we left scripture and run to human reasoning here?

The next piece of foolishness mentioned was a comment affirming that they only met in homes. Did they *only* meet in homes? The author of this question stated it, but did not prove it. It sounded like she had been reading books from proponents of the "house church movement" (which would explain why she erroneously stated that the "church is a movement". The earliest disciples met daily in the temple, and later in the synagogue, and other accommodations (Acts 2:46; 5:11f; 19:8-10). A comment in the same thread asserted that we have no authority for church buildings. Here is a man who does not understand how one determines scriptural authority. But he speaks up to teach as if he does understand. Does he have a problem with church buildings? No! He just wants to abandon a reliance upon Scripture for *what God expects* of us.

Now I don't mean to be unkind, but we have a lot of people teaching (by sermons, Blogs, social media and comments affixed to such) who need to heed James 3:1. The stricter judgment will be incurred for opening one's mouth to teach error.

Tonight's lesson will go into greater detail on this subject of the church and denominationalism. Please make every effort to be here. Some may not like the fact that I am talking about the teachings of someone 1,200 miles away; but they are appearing on the computers and tablets of the members here where I preach. And that makes it my job to teach truth in answer to the "distant" error.



FOR THE RECORD

WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

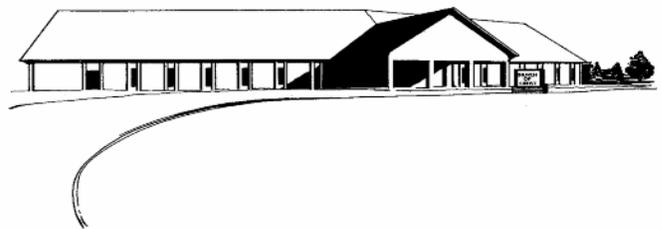
MONTHLY ASSIGNMENTS

Sections have been removed to preserve members' privacy

IN KEEPING WITH OUR LONG STANDING AGREEMENT, THOSE SERVING PUBLICLY ARE REMINDED TO PLEASE DRESS IN A MANNER RESPECTFUL OF THE GOD WHOM WE SERVE.

ELDERS:

Ruben Amador
Matthew Heaton
Donnie Mangrum
Steve Voss



DEACONS:

John Coleman	Ken Dunsmore
David Ellison	Ray Farrell
Aubrey Garner	Steve Geraci
Steve LaGrasta	John Light
Steven Martin	Mike McMurray
Jason Mock	David Stevenson
Glenn Tomblin	

TIMES OF SERVICES

Sunday Bible Classes	9:30 AM
Sunday Morning Assembly	10:30 AM
Sunday Evening Assembly	6:00 PM
Wednesday Bible Classes	7:30 PM

EVANGELIST & EDITOR:

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