

# VIGIL



*“Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”*

*~ I Peter 5:8*

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What Have You Heard About the Church of Christ?

## Is the Church of Christ a Cult? Todd Clippard

The media's response to the Winkler family tragedy has thrust the church into the national spotlight. Many of the nighttime news, analysis, and commentary programs have invited guests to comment on the church and her beliefs. Some of these comments have been well researched and well-presented; most have not. Some of the hosts have allowed ignorant call-in guests to speak as experts, and two themes seem to arise each time: the church of Christ is a cult or exhibits cult-like tendencies, and the church of Christ is oppressive to women. The first theme is the subject of this study.

For the last two weeks, I have received numerous phone calls and emails from our local members and friends from other congregations about how the church is being “trashed” in the national media. Unlike most of these folks, I do not believe the bad press to be some kind of national conspiracy, nor do I believe all the negative press to be necessarily bad. Allow me to explain.

In order for the media to engage in a conspiracy against us, **they would first have to know who we are.** It is painfully obvious that most in the

national media have never heard of the church. This concerns me more that what they say. What does it say about us and our commitment to preaching the gospel at home when most of the people in this country (outside the “Bible Belt”) have no idea who we are? May God forgive us for our “Great Omission” of the Great Commission (Revelation 2:4-5)!

Regarding the bad things many are saying about us on the television and radio, I'd rather somebody be saying something about us than ignoring us altogether! Perhaps all this talk will compel someone to investigate the church “to see whether these things are so” (Acts 17:11).

Is the church of Christ a cult? In short, no, the church is not a cult. However, because the term “cult” is thrown around so loosely, many do not know what constitutes a cult. In his classic 1963 work, Four Major Cults, Anthony A. Hoekema examined and exposed the four largest American cults of that day: Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Scientists, and the Seventh Day Adventists. Hoekema was careful to define his terms (something we should always do when speaking

of cults or any other religious subject), and gave ten characteristics of a cult. They are: 1) A defined and abrupt break from historic Christianity. 2) A belief that the entire Christian church is apostate. 3) God has given the cult some new light on saving truth. 4) A tendency to major in minors – take peripheral passages and give them prominence: a) Mormons: celestial marriage, baptism for the dead. b) Jehovah's Witnesses: door to door witnessing c) Christian Scientists: denial of any illness or sin. d) Seventh Day Adventist: 3rd angel's order "keep 7th day" 5) Tendency to perfectionism. 6) Extra-biblical source of religious authority. a) Mormons: Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price b) Jehovah's Witnesses: Scripture Studies, Watchtower c) Christians Scientists: Science and Health with the Key to the Scriptures d) Seventh Day Adventists: The Great Controversy, Steps to Christ.

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## EDITORIAL

### What Have You Heard About the Church of Christ?

Ronnie Hayes

Have you heard anything in the media about the Church of Christ recently? Is it right? Do individuals really care if the accusations leveled against the Church are true or false? Some don't, but for those who are honest, they want to know the truth.

As a Christian, we should know that it is no secret that some will hate the Church. Christ warned, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matthew 5:10-12). Paul asked those at Galatia, "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth" (Galatians 4:16). The answer to Paul's question is "YES"! There are many, who reject the truth when they hear it and become very angry because through the truth you have exposed their sin. This was true even of those who heard Christ, the master teacher. "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him" (John 6:66). We know as God's children that we will endure persecution and realize that some will say or do anything to hurt the body of Christ.

Leveling accusations against the Church is nothing new. F. W. Mattox, in his book, *The Eternal Kingdom* writes:

"Christians began to be accused of most absurd crimes.

These accusations included incest, cannibalism, the drinking of blood, infanticide and plotting to overthrow the government.

There were two chief reasons why these accusations were made. One is the development of an extreme gnosticism and the other the existence of illegal pagan societies that had actually practiced in secret the things Christians were accused of" (89).

In this edition of the *Vigil*, we will give a scriptural answer to some of the most frequently heard accusations made against the Church. Is it true that the Church of Christ is a Cult? Are women really under bondage in the Church of Christ? Is the Church of Christ just another denomination? Are only members of the Church of Christ going to heaven? Does the Church of Christ really hate music? Does the Church of Christ believe in the Old Testament?

One of the most frequent statements heard about the Church of Christ is it is that group which teaches, "water salvation". Or to state it differently, the Church of Christ teaches salvation by works, while the majority of Christendom teaches salvation by faith.

It is true that the Churches of Christ teach the **necessity of baptism**. Why? Because that is what the Bible teaches. How would anyone think anything else when they read:

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15,16). "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the

putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21).

The Church of Christ is accused of being that group which teaches salvation by works. Is this true? NO! Denominations base their teachings on Ephesians 2:8,9, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast". This passage doesn't teach grace only, faith only and that there is nothing that one has to do to be saved. Yet, this is what the denominational preachers say. I believe every word of these two verses. We are saved by grace. Titus tells us it is "...the grace of God that bringeth salvation..." (Titus 2:11). No one will be saved without faith. Christ said, "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). Meritorious works will save no one. I cannot earn my salvation, but to draw the conclusion that grace and faith does away with obedience is wrong! God even required obedience of Christ. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:8,9). Paul wrote, "But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:35). Christ said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). No faithful gospel preacher that I know of teaches that works can save one, nor that grace and faith negate obedience. Regardless what you've heard in the media or from another person, if you want the truth, **SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES** (cf. Acts 17:11).

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## Are Women In Bondage In The Church of Christ?

James E. Rogers

Some have suggested that women are required to play the role of bondage in the church of Christ. This is done because God has placed some restrictions on what the woman may do in her work as a Christian. This matter deserves our attention.

God has placed restrictions on every Christian, both men and women. No Christian is allowed to decide for himself what he will or will not do in his service to God. The idea of subjection is repulsive to some in our pluralistic society. Many operate on the premise they may do anything they please and everyone, including God, must accept their decisions. This is simply not the case with God, nor with those who seek to please God.

Paul recorded that "the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3). One sees there are restrictions as to headship placed on both men and women. These restrictions in no way place one into bondage in a negative sense. Every Christian has willingly placed himself into bond-service to righteousness (Romans 6:16). These restrictions do not impede one's service to God, but are in place to allow men and women to be able to render acceptable and full service to God. Since it is the place of women that is under consideration in this study, let us notice some things about her role in serving God.

### GOD HAS ALWAYS HAD A PLACE FOR WOMEN IN HIS SERVICE.

God had a place for women in His service in the Old Testament (Genesis 2:18-24; Judges 4:1-5:31; 1 Samuel 1:1-2:21; 2 Kings 4:8-37; 5:2-19; 11:1-12:2; Esther 1-10; Proverbs 31:10-31). This work allowed the woman to render maximum service to God.

God had a place for women in His service in the New Testament

(Luke 1:5-24,57-59, 26-55; Acts 9:36-42; 16:14,15; 21:9; Romans 16:1-6; 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14,15). These passages, as do those in the Old Testament, show the work women may do to the glory of God.

It should be obvious that the woman was working happily in the sphere of activity authorized by God for her. In no case did these women believe they had been placed in some service that refused to allow them to reach their potential or that demeaned them in any way. No one of them thought she was being mistreated by being restricted to the sphere of work assigned her.

### GOD HAS RESTRICTED THE PLACE OF WOMEN IN HIS SERVICE

There is a sphere of activity in which God has placed the woman. God's Will determines the activities of this sphere.

There are some things women can do in service to God. The woman may teach (Titus 2:3-5; Acts 18:24-26), engage in good works (1 Kings 17:8-24; Acts 18:2,3), help rear her children properly (Judges 13:1-25) and function properly in the home (Titus 2:4,5).

There are some things women cannot do in service to God. "The New Testament instruction that limits the sphere of woman's leadership activity is based on a creation principle, not culture. First Corinthians 11:2-16; 14:33b-35, Ephesians 5:21-33, and 1 Timothy 2:8-15 are four New Testament contexts where Paul discussed the distinctive roles of men and women. Paul's reason for feminine subjection is based upon **the creation** (1 Corinthians 11:7-9; 14:34b; 1 Timothy 2:13)" (Meadows, 485,486).

Women cannot be head over men (1 Corinthians 11:3) nor speak in a mixed assembly, in the sense of prophesying, because this would put them in a position of authority over a

man which is forbidden (1 Corinthians 14:34-36). The word for "silence" is "sigao", which means "to be silent" (Vine 4:30). This would restrict women from leading prayer in the mixed assembly (1 Timothy 2:8). Women cannot present themselves in an ungodly manner (1 Timothy 2:9,10).

Women cannot teach nor have dominion over men (1 Timothy 2:12). "Teach" is from the verb "didaskoo", which means "to give instruction" (Vine 4:111). This prohibits a woman from preaching in the mixed assembly. "Nor" translates "sude" which means a woman is not to teach nor in any other manner to exercise dominion over a man. "Have dominion over" is from "authentēs" which means to have power or authority over one (Vine 1:89,90). Women cannot serve as elders (1 Timothy 3:2) nor as deacons (1 Timothy 3:12). This in no way means they cannot serve God, but they are not allowed to serve in these capacities.

### IN ORDER TO GO TO HEAVEN, ONE MUST RESPECT GOD'S RESTRICTIONS.

God has demonstrated to us that He "will do" us "good" (Genesis 32:9). It is not "every one that saith . . . Lord, Lord" that "shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21-27). We "must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Women must live so they may say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:6-8; Revelation 2:10).

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## Does The Church Of Christ Believe In The Old Testament?

Thomas W. Larkin

At times members of the churches of Christ have been accused of not believing in the Old Testament. Certainly we should respect all of God's inspired word, including the Old Testament. But there is a big difference between saying "I believe in the Old Testament" and saying "I am under the authority of the Old Testament." A proper understanding of this topic reveals that we learn from the Old Testament, but we do not live under its law. We recognize it as authentic, but not as authoritative. We learn from its principles, but we do not live under its precepts.

When God gave the Law, he made it clear that this covenant was limited to Israel (Exodus 34:27). Moses said, "The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day" (Deuteronomy 5:3). The law itself clearly reflects its temporary nature. God foretold the day when he would make "a new covenant" – one that differed from his covenant with Israel (Jeremiah 31:31-34). The Hebrew writer, making the argument that Jesus removed the old covenant to establish the new, quoted this Old Testament prophecy and then concluded, "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away" (Hebrews 8:13).

Further, the Bible teaches that the Law was abolished at the cross. Paul spoke of Christ "abolishing in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances" when he died on the cross (Ephesians 2:15). To the Colossians he spoke of the Law as "the handwriting of ordinances that was against us" which Jesus took out of the way, nailing it to his cross (Colossians 2:14).

Even though God's people are not under the authority of the Old

Testament, we should not ignore it or consider it irrelevant in our modern world. Saying that the Old Testament is not law for God's people is not to say that it is unimportant. In fact, God makes it clear that his people should treasure the Old Testament.

We should believe the Old Testament because it is **inspired** of God. Throughout the Old Testament the claim is made that it is a divine product. The Old Testament contains more than 2,000 phrases such as, "The Lord said," or "Thus saith the Lord." David said that God's Spirit spoke by him (2 Samuel 23:2) and God told Jeremiah that he had put his words in his mouth (Jeremiah 1:9). The New Testament supports this claim. Paul's statement, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16) certainly includes the Old Testament and Peter indicated that the Holy Spirit guided the Old Testament prophets in their writing (2 Peter 1:21).

Consider Jesus' endorsement of the Old Testament. He quoted 24 of the Old Testament books as well as every section of the Old Testament. He accepted its historical accuracy – its creation account, Noah's flood, the prophet Jonah, etc. Jesus even based his argument concerning the resurrection on the tense of the verb in Exodus 3:6 (cf. Matthew 22:23-33). Speaking of the Old Testament he said that the scriptures cannot be broken (John 10:35) and that no part of the law would pass away until it was fulfilled (Matthew 5:17). If for no other reason we should believe the Old Testament because Jesus and the New Testament writers did so.

We should also believe the Old Testament because it **instructs** us on important matters. The New Testament clearly sets forth this idea. Paul wrote, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through

patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4). The Old Testament's unfolding of such themes as sin's entrance into the world, God's covenant with Abraham and Israel's place and purpose are vital to a correct understanding of the New Testament. Without the background of the Old Testament sacrificial system we cannot fully appreciate Jesus as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The book of Matthew with its numerous prophecies, Hebrews and its discussion of priesthood and sacrifice, Revelation and its myriad Old Testament allusions, as well as large sections of other books – Romans, Galatians, even Acts – are all impossible to understand without the Old Testament. Add to this what the Old Testament teaches concerning the character and nature of God and the necessity of our trusting and obeying him, and it becomes readily apparent that we should believe the Old Testament.

Finally we should believe the Old Testament because of its **intent** of bringing man to Christ. The central character of the Old Testament is Jesus and its dominant theme is that salvation is found only in him. One New Testament passage set forth this fact clearly – "Christ is the *end* (goal, twl) of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth" (Romans 10:4; see also Galatians 3:23-26). A correct understanding of the Old Testament brings one to the conclusion that Jesus is the Christ and that to be saved from sin one must obey him.

We believe the Old Testament – not as authoritative law, but as an inspired book from God to be treasured and studied by those who love him and want to please him.

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## Is The Church of Christ A Denomination?

B. J. Clarke

**Introduction:** On the nationally televised Nancy Grace program, a Baptist preacher (Tom Rukala) claimed: “Well, the Church of Christ is a relatively new church. It was started about 150 years ago by Alexander Campbell.” He is not the first to level such a charge and he won’t be the last. If what he said is true, then the Church of Christ is just another denomination among denominations. But is this true? Four passages answer the question.

**Matthew 16:18:** Jesus said, “Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). Did Christ promise to build His church? Yes! When Christ built His church to Whom would it belong? Would it not belong to the Christ Who built it? If it belonged to Christ, would it not be the church of Christ? Furthermore, did Christ ever build the church? If so, when did He build it?

**Acts 2:** In Acts 2, Peter’s words convicted some to cry, “What shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). Peter answered, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). Approximately 3000 souls gladly welcomed this message and were baptized. Upon their baptism they were “added” (Acts 2:41). To what were they added? “The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47). But, wait a minute. To whose church did the Lord add them? Was it the church which Christ promised to build in Matthew 16:18? If not, then whose church was this? On the other hand, if the church which Christ promised to build is the one in Acts 2, then those added to it were added to the church of (belonging to) Christ.

I would love to ask Mr. Rukala the following questions on national television: (1) Was a church established on the day of Pentecost, or not? (2) Did this church belong to

Christ? If so, then was it not the church of Christ? (3) If it was not the church of Christ, then whose church was it? (4) If you admit the church of Christ was established on Pentecost (nearly 2,000 years ago), how can you say it is a relatively new church that was only started 150 years ago?

**Romans 16:16:** In the book of Romans, (written around 56-58 A. D.) Paul declared, “the churches of Christ salute you” (Romans 16:16). Obviously, the church Christ promised to build had been built by the time of the book of Romans. In fact, the church of Christ had been established in a number of different locations, but each and every church still belonged to Christ—thus Paul identified them as “churches of Christ.”

Alexander Campbell was born in Ireland on September 12, 1788. This raises a very obvious question, which I would love to hear Mr. Rukala answer on national television. If, as you say, the church of Christ was started by Alexander Campbell about 150 years ago, then please explain how the apostle Paul could refer to churches of Christ as being in existence almost 2,000 years earlier? Probably, Mr. Rukala would respond, “The churches of Christ Paul spoke of were different than the Church of Christ started by Alexander Campbell.” It is one thing to make this statement and quite another to prove it, which brings us to one final passage.

**Luke 8:11:** In explaining the Parable of the Sower, Jesus said, “The seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:11). When the seed (the Word of God) was planted into hearts of men in the first century, what did it produce? It most certainly did not produce a multiplicity of denominations all teaching opposing doctrines. Rather, it produced the church of Christ (Acts 2; Romans 16:16) and Christians (Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16). If we plant the

same seed today, we will get the same results. If we do the same thing they did, we’ll be the same thing they were—Christians who are members of the undenominational church of Christ.

**Conclusion:** A little girl was walking to church with her father. Missing her mother, who attended another church, she said, “Daddy, does God do all things for the best?” Daddy replied, “Well sure, honey. God does all things for the best.” Tearfully, the girl responded, “Daddy, if God does all things for the best, why didn’t He make just one church so you, me, and Momma could all go together?” God did make just one church, but, sadly, man polluted it with the doctrines and commandments of men (Matthew 15:8-9; 1 Timothy 4:1ff). To get back to the undenominational church of Christ we must go back beyond the pollutions of men to the pure seed of the kingdom, the Word of God.

Men have become so used to denominationalism that it is hard for them to think undenominationally. Some years ago, after a series of studies with a Methodist couple, the light went on in the mind of the wife, who said to me excitedly, “Wait a minute—you’re not asking us to leave our denomination for the Church of Christ denomination. You’re asking us to leave denominationalism altogether and just be members of the church of Christ we read about in the New Testament.” When I assured her she was exactly right she said, “Shall we go to the pond?” She and her husband were baptized immediately to be added to Christ’s church, the church belonging to Christ, the undenominational church of Christ (Acts 2:41, 47; Romans 16:16). May their tribe increase!

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## Are Only Members of the Church of Christ Going to Heaven?

Cliff Goodwin

Have you ever heard of a “loaded question?” Some who ask the above question do so with a motive and manner that makes it “loaded.” They ask this question meaning, “Is *your denomination* the only one going to heaven?” When asked with this mentality, the question is simply not fair for at least two reasons. One, the New Testament knows nothing of denominationalism, except that the denominational spirit was condemned at Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). If we limit our attempts at Biblical discussion to the Bible, and only the Bible, then we must accept this fact. Denominationalism is unscriptural, and therefore, sinful in religion (cf. Colossians 3:17). For this reason, any question springing from a mindset that is rooted in denominational thinking is likely to be skewed. Two, when this question is asked from a purely denominational standpoint, it implicitly accuses members of the church of Christ of something of which they are not guilty. Faithful members of the church of Christ do not practice, adhere to, or even fellowship denominationalism. We have no cause or denomination of our own to advance on the religious landscape of the world. Members of the church of Christ do not champion denominationalism; we are not promoting just another sect out of the hundreds, or even thousands, existent in the world. The church which belongs to Christ—the church about which one reads in the New Testament—is the only true church.

Assuming, however, that this question is asked by one sincerely seeking truth, what is the Biblical answer? First, the question must be answered in the absolute sense, and in this sense, the answer is “No.” There will be sundry souls in heaven who were never members of the church of Christ. These will include the countless unborn babies, infants and young children who died before ever

reaching the age of accountability. Such souls might be more appropriately termed “safe” than “saved.”

Continuing to answer this question in the absolute sense, the answer would be “No,” because of the sundry souls saved under Patriarchy and the law of Moses. The Bible makes it quite clear that patriarchs like Enoch, Noah and Abraham will be in heaven (cf. Hebrews 11:5-10; et. al.), yet none of them were members of the church of Christ. In fact, the church of Christ was not even established when the patriarchs lived. The same is true for the faithful who lived under Judaism. The events that transpired on the mount of Transfiguration imply that both Moses and Elijah will be in heaven (Matthew 17:1-13), yet they also antedated the establishment of the church—an event occurring on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2).

However, most who ask this question do not do so in an absolute sense. Rather they intend the question in a limited sense—the sense regarding only *accountable* people living *today*, in the Christian Age. This distinction does need to be made, for the Bible makes it expressly clear that all who are living today are under the New Testament law of Christ—not the Old Testament law of Moses (cf. Galatians 6:2; Colossians 2:14-17; Hebrews 10:9-10).

The New Testament teaches that Christ died in order to establish His church, purchasing it with His blood (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25). While Christ did, in fact, die for the sins of the entire world (1 John 2:2), the only human beings who actually enjoy the benefits of His blood are those who are members of His church. Note Paul’s inspired reasoning: 1) Redemption through Christ’s blood is enjoyed *in* Christ, **not** outside of Christ (Colossians 1:14); 2) Baptism is the only Biblical doorway *into*

Christ (Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:27); 3) Those who are baptized into Christ are *added to* His church (Acts 2:38, 41, 47); and 4) The church is the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23). What does all this mean? Simply put, we learn two fundamental facts. One, it is **impossible** for any accountable person today to be saved outside of Christ (cf. John 14:6; Acts 4:12; et. al.). Two, it is **equally impossible** for anyone to be in Christ, without simultaneously being in His church—Christ’s spiritual body (cf. Colossians 1:24b).

Most people who claim to believe the Bible have no problem at all understanding fact one above; they readily agree that Jesus is the only hope of salvation. However, many balk at fact two—that being in Christ means being in His body, the church. Their dissent notwithstanding, the Bible conclusively teaches this second fact as well as the first. Consider these three reasons as to why being in Christ means being in His church. One, the same exact act places one in both Christ and His church—being baptized in water according to the teachings of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 3:5; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 5:25-26). Two, all those in Christ are saved (cf. Ephesians 1:3; Colossians 1:13-14; 2 Timothy 2:10), and the saved are added to the church (Acts 2:47). Three, the church is the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23). It is just as impossible to be in Christ without being in His church, as it is to be in a cup full of water without being in the water!

For these reasons, when Christ returns He will save His church—and only His church. “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,” (Ephesians 5:23).

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## Does The Church of Christ Hate Music?

Dale Hubbert

Many false accusations have been hurled at the church over the years. One of the stranger claims is that the Church of Christ hates music. Satan is identified as a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44). This allegation is among the lies. The church for which our Lord died embraces and loves the music authorized in the New Testament.

Some confusion may arise in regard to what music is. Music takes a variety of formats. Not all forms of music meet with scriptural approval when used in worship. The use of instruments without the accompaniment of singing is one form of music. Singing without the use of instruments is identified as acapella and is another form of music. Music also could include singing along with the use of the sounds produced by instruments. Each of these would be understood under the umbrella of music. Not all however are commanded or approved of God in the worship setting.

The church is a lover of music but shares an equal concern that the music of the church has divine authority. God has not left us to wonder what is pleasing when it comes to music in worship. What may have been used prior to the establishment of the church and the last will and testament of Jesus Christ is not pertinent to what the scriptures teach in the Christian age.

What does the New Testament say about the music we take joy and delight in? Jesus provided an example, "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives" (Matthew 26:30). Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises (Acts 16:26). Jesus knew that music was expression of the soul and that music is desired and loved by the followers of our Lord.

The church accepts and finds joy in singing according to biblical instruction. That instruction directs

that the music of the church is singing by the congregation without the aid of instruments. Instrumental music and special music by a select group of members in the worship transgresses the law of God. Why will members of the Church of Christ avoid the use of instruments in worship or only have a chosen few sing? It is not because of a blanket opposition to music that uses an instrument or has special singers. There are many types of music outside the worship setting that are totally acceptable and appreciated which use instruments and special singers.

Why not the use of instruments in the worship assembly? It rejects the authority of Christ (Matthew 28:18). It violates the principle of faith (2 Corinthians 5:7, Romans 10:17). It makes worship vain and voids God's word (Matthew 15:9). It violates the principle of the specific command to sing (Colossians 3:16, Ephesians 5:19).

Dr. Frederic Ritter, one time director of the School of Music at Vassar College, made the following observation: "We have no real knowledge of the exact character of the music which formed a part of the religious devotion of the first Christian congregations. It was, however, purely vocal. Instrumental music was excluded, at first, as having been used by the Romans at their depraved festivities; and everything reminding them of heathen worship could not be endured by the new religionists."

Members of the church of Christ are not the only ones who have supported vocal music and opposed instrumental music in worship. Leaders in many religious groups including John Calvin, John Wesley, Adam Clarke, Charles H. Spurgeon, and Theodore Beza never permitted the use of instruments in their services.

Why not a solo, duet, trio, quartet,

choir, chorus, or some other special group in the worship? Because singing is a command to each individual to be done collectively when we come together with the intent of worshipping God. Can a group make our financial contribution for us? Can someone else take the Lord's Supper for us? Neither can someone else or a group do my part of the praising of God and edifying of the brethren through song.

The church loves to sing because of the blessing of the understanding of the words we are singing. "I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the understanding" (1 Corinthians 14:15). The words we sing offer praise to God and inspiration to our souls. It is important that the content of the songs we sing are true to the teachings of the Bible. Not all songs and singing meet that criteria.

The church loves to sing because our singing teaches and encourages. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16). While every Christian may not be a preacher or Bible Class teacher, every child of God becomes a teacher during our singing.

The church loves to sing because of the content of our singing. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19). Songs that please God in worship have the parameters of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. These songs build up and excite the hearts of Christians.

Does the Church of Christ hate music? Certainly not. The Church of Christ loves the music authorized in the scriptures: singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord.

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### Continued from page 17 ----- Is the Church of Christ a Cult? By Todd Clippard

7) Denial of justification by grace. 8) Devaluation of Christ; emphasis given to earthly leaders a) Mormons: Joseph Smith b) Jehovah's Witnesses: Charles Taze Russell, Joseph "Judge" Rutherford c) Christian Scientists: Mary Baker Eddy d) Seventh Day Adventists: Ellen G. White 9) Belief that they are the exclusive community of the saved. 10) Central role in eschatology (the last days, judgement, and/or eternity).<sup>i</sup> To this list I would add "Avoidance or redefinition of major theological themes" (e.g., nature of God and man, sin, atonement, justification, judgment, eternity, etc.). This was/is a common ploy of Max King and the adherents to King's heretical A.D. 70 doctrine.

It is of utmost import to understand that belief in one of these characteristics, (or even two or three depending on which ones), is insufficient to categorize a group as a cult. For example, the church of Christ believes what the Bible teaches about the church being the exclusive community of the saved (cf Acts 2:47; Eph 5:25). Members of other groups, including Catholics,<sup>ii</sup> Lutherans,<sup>iii</sup> Baptists<sup>iv</sup>, and even some Freemasons<sup>v</sup>, also believe the same. But adherence to this single point does not warrant classification as a cult.

We must be careful in our use of terminology, else it becomes meaningless. A brief admonition – some among us have been quick to

characterize our brethren as Calvinists based upon their teaching of the work of the Holy Spirit. While one's views of the work of the Holy Spirit may appear in some ways to resemble those of traditional Calvinists, such does not make our brethren Calvinists! To be a Calvinist, one must embrace most or all of the five points of Calvinism, and the careless use of the term diminishes its real meaning and slanderously misrepresents the views of our brethren.

Some have recently charged the church with some of the listed cult characteristics, but have done so out of bias, ignorance, or dishonesty. For example, a Baptist preacher, speaking on CNN's "Nancy Grace" program, said the church of Christ was a "relatively new church . . . started about 150 years ago by Alexander Campbell."<sup>vi</sup> He later contended the church of Christ "has cult-like characteristics."<sup>vii</sup> Obviously, this man possesses extreme bias against the church. But this again demonstrates our failure to get the message out when a news analyst (and I'm probably being too generous to Nancy Grace) thinks nothing of having a Baptist preacher comment on the church.

Of course, the church of Christ was established on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and is Divinely recorded in Acts 2. Campbell himself disavowed any part in establishing a new religion,<sup>viii</sup> and

others had already embraced the restoration principle while Campbell was still living in Scotland as a Presbyterian!<sup>ix</sup>

Furthermore, there is much evidence that the Lord's church existed in England and other parts of Europe many years before the American restoration movement. If Hoekema's list provides a genuine picture of what constitutes a cult, and we believe it does, then there is no way the church of Christ may be so designated. I hope the recent turbulence will produce in the minds of men the same thing it did in Acts 28, when some Roman Jews said to Paul, "But we desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere"(v.22).

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i. Four Major Cults, Anthony A. Hoekema p 373-403. ii. Catechism of the Catholic Church, Ligouri Publications, 1994, p 224, paragraph 846. iii. Erwin Kurth, Catechetical Helps, The Studio Press, 1935, p 107. iv. This doctrine is represented among Baptists by the "Baptist Bride" and "Old Landmark" positions.

v. <http://www.nireland.com/evangelicaltruth/fmar.htm> vi. Transcript of CNN's March 27, 2006 "Nancy Grace" program. vii. Ibid viii. Earl I. West, The Search for the Ancient Order, 1990, p 69-71 ix. Ibid, p 10-14. James O'Kelly and Elias Smith were among the earliest restorationists, shunning denominational creeds and names as early as 1801. Alexander Campbell did not come to America until 1809