

THE INSTRUCTOR



"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." 2 Timothy 3:16

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THE SUTTON-MERIDETH DEBATE

On September 4, 5, 7 and 8, Carrol R. Sutton and J. Noel Merideth met in discussion on whether or not it is Scriptural for churches of Christ to **build and maintain benevolent organizations such as Boles Orphan Home, Tennessee Orphan Home, Childhaven, and Home For The Aged for the care of the needy.** The first two nights brother Sutton affirmed that such was **not** Scriptural, and on the second two nights brother Merideth affirmed such to be Scriptural. The first two nights were held in Paducah, KY and the last two in Metropolis, Illinois. Good order and a good spirit prevailed throughout the discussion.

Bro. Sutton made his arguments based on the teaching of the Bible concerning Scriptural authority. He showed Bible authority is established in one of three ways: precept, approved example, or necessary implication, and it comes to us in one of two forms: generic or specific. Generic authority includes various methods of carrying out precepts, examples, etc., but where God specifies a matter, it eliminates other classes, kinds, etc. of the thing specified. Since God specified gopher

wood, other kinds of wood are excluded; in specifying **sing** other kinds of music are eliminated. When God specified the **church** in evangelism, a missionary society is excluded, and when he specified the **church** in relief, benevolent organizations such as those in the proposition are excluded.

Bro. Merideth admitted the truthfulness of brother Sutton's chart and said he had preached the same thing many times. He claimed, however, that such organizations were simply legal homes which restore the original home the child had lost. By reading the various charters and by using a number of charts, brother Sutton showed that these were **not** merely homes, but were actually business enterprises which not only operated "orphan homes" but also engaged in other activities, such as renting out apartments and condominiums and even charging for some of the "patients" in some of the homes.

On being asked to tell **how** care could be provided, brother Sutton answered by telling how the church — without such organizations as those in the propositions — could

(Continued on page 3)

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Editorial . . .

IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST A DENOMINATION?

There are hundreds of denominations (religious bodies authorized by man's authority and governed by human wisdom) in the United States of America alone. They differ in name, doctrine and practice and yet **all** of them **claim to be of God** and that God is with them. Are these denominations authorized by the authority of God? Are they governed by God's wisdom? Is God the author of all this division and confusion? Are they really **of God**? **Is God really with them?** (See 1 Cor. 1:10; Ephesians 4:1-6 and 1 Corinthians 14:33).

Many people say, "the church of Christ is just another denomination." There may be some religious bodies called "the church of Christ" which may be denominations but when people make that statement referring to those who are truly following the teaching of the New Testament, it is merely an assumption. If a person understands the teaching of Christ and is honest, he will NOT make such a statement. **THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS NOT A DENOMINATION, nor ANY PART OF ANY DENOMINATION! Neither IS ANY DENOMINATION ANY PART OF THE BODY OF CHRIST!**

Jesus said: ". . . **Upon this rock I will build my church . . .**" (Mt.

16:18). The pronoun "**my**" indicates that the church would be "**of**" or "**belong to**" Christ. The church that Christ built is "**of**" and "**belongs to**" Him! Did Jesus have any denomination in mind when He said: ". . . **I will build my church . . .?** Obviously **not**. Jesus did **not** promise to build a denomination! There is **no** evidence that Jesus ever built a single, solitary denomination!

To what denomination did the apostles, the three thousand Jews on Pentecost, the Samaritans, the eunuch, the jailor and the Corinthians belong (or were a part of) after they obeyed the Lord's will? (See Acts 2:1-47; Act 8; Acts 16:25-34 and Acts 18:8; 1 Cor. 12:13). Were they not **Christians**? Were they not citizens in the kingdom (Col. 1:13-14), and members of the body of Christ which is the church? (See Col. 1:18; Ephesians 1:22-23; 1 Cor. 12). But **THEY WERE NOT "of" AND DID NOT "belong to" ANY DENOMINATION!** To be a member of a denomination a person must meet the requirements set forth by that denomination. To be a Christian, to be in the body of Christ which is the church, one must meet the requirements set forth by the Lord.

In the first century, the Lord added the saved to the church which was purchased with His blood. (See Acts 2:47; Acts 20:28 and Eph. 5:25). **What about now?** If a sinner **hears** and **believes** the gospel (Rom. 10:17; Mark 16:15-16), **repents** of sins (Acts 2:38), **confesses** faith in Christ (Rom. 10:9-10), and **is baptized for remission of sins** in order to get **into** Christ (Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:26-27) just like the 3,000 on Pentecost in Acts 2, the Samaritans in Acts 8:5-13, the eunuch in Acts 8:26-39, the jailor in Acts 16:22-34 and the Corinthians in Acts 18:8, **WILL THAT MAKE HIM A MEMBER OF ANY DENOMINATION ON EARTH?** If so, why does it and which one? Please tell us to which denomination did the early Christians belong? Since Acts 2:47 tells us that the Lord added the saved to the church,

(Continued on page 4)

THE SUTTON-MERIDETH DEBATE

(Continued from page 1)

provide the care. Interestingly, brother Merideth agreed with every point in brother Sutton's answer, except he disagreed as to "**who**" would be cared for, which point actually was **not** in the proposition. In another speech, brother Sutton showed a chart of brother Merideth's "**home**" and showed such was nowhere close to being a home; the "parents" don't live with the children, don't know the children, the children never see the "parents", etc.

One of the surprising things about the debate was the weakness of brother Merideth's defense. This was especially evident in that the majority of his material and time was spent on matters which were not points of issue. Most of what he had to say was on the subject of **limited benevolence** and whether or not churches could do what individuals could do. It was estimated that in one 30 minute speech no more than three minutes was spent on the issue. The rest of his time was on other matters. Brother Sutton pointed out that such was **not** the issue and even if brother Merideth proved what most of his time was used for, it still must be proven that the church could build and maintain these benevolent organizations to perform such work. This he never did.

Another part of the discussion which showed in a very clear way brother Merideth's weakness was in his unwillingness or inability to answer questions. For example, when asked to give the passage for a congregation to give to a home, he replied by quoting (and misapplying) a statement by Eugene Britnell. No doubt, readers will be surprised — and I'm sure brother Britnell will be — to find out that **what brother Britnell said** is Scriptural proof. When asked if a church could give to a natural Baptist home, brother Merideth said a church can give to what an individual can give to. When

asked if an individual can give to such, he said the church can give what an individual can give to. When asked if he knew if a church or an individual could give to such, he said the church can give to what an individual can give to. This is **not** a misquote! Numerous other instances could be given of his failure to give clear, forthright answers to plain questions.

Brother Sutton repeatedly pointed out that whereas most of brother Merideth's material was on the wrong subject, they already have propositions signed to discuss the limits of church relief. At that time he would be glad to deal with that material. It will be interesting to see if that discussion ever takes place.

— **Hiram Hutto**

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DID YOU KNOW?

Although some people believe that **we are saved by confession only**, a study of the Scriptures should convince all of us that such is **not** taught in the Word of God. Salvation is by confession, but it is **NOT** by **confession only!**

DID YOU KNOW THAT THE BIBLE SAYS:

1. "**Whosoever therefore shall CONFESS ME before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven.**" (Matthew 10:32)

2. "**Whosoever shall CONFESS THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.**" (1 John 4:15)

3. "**That if thou shall CONFESS WITH THY MOUTH THE LORD JESUS, . . . thou shall be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and WITH THE MOUTH CONFESION IS MADE unto salvation.**" (Rom. 10:9-10)

In order for one to be saved by **confession**, one **MUST** believe that Jesus is the Son of God and he must **repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.** (See John 20:30-31; Acts 2:38).

(CRS)

IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST A DENOMINATION?

(Continued from page 2)

do you think that God has changed His plan and today He adds the saved to various denominations?

All denominations exist without the authority of Christ. No denomination that exists today is the church of Christ or, in other words, the church of or that belongs to Christ. The church of Christ, i.e., the church that Jesus built, is NOT A denomination!

Since it is obvious from a study of the Scriptures that a person can be a Christian, live, work, worship and die in the Lord and be saved eternally WITHOUT JOINING OR EVEN HEARING OF A HUMAN DENOMINATION, every denomination on

earth is a non-essential, useless, and worthless institution as far as man's salvation is concerned! So why should any person who is interested in going to heaven be in one? In Matthew 15:13 Jesus said: "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up."

Why not put your faith in Jesus Christ? Why not obey His gospel (2 Thess. 1:7-9) that you may be saved and added to His church? (See Acts 2:47) If you are not in the church, Christ is not your eternal Saviour? (See Eph. 5:23).

(CRS)

— SENTENCE SERMONS —

Those who are truly peacemakers are called the children of God.

* * * * *

It is not a shame to have only one talent, but it is a shame to not use it.

* * * * *

You will never travel the road to heaven if you stay parked.

* * * * *

To make a mountain out of a mole hill just add more dirt.

* * * * *

To multiply joy, you must share it with others.

CHURCH OF CHRIST

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