

## THE OAKWOOD ROAD

# CONTENDER

“...exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith...”

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### CHURCHANITY

We were taught in school that "words are signs of ideas." This being true, it is easy to detect unscriptural ideas by listening to people talk, or reading what they write. It was for this reason that Paul instructed Timothy to "hold fast to the form or pattern of sound words ... One of the "earmarks" of apostasy is a failure to heed this admonition and begin using words which do not express scriptural ideas, or else use scriptural words with unscriptural application.

One of the most frequent errors occurring among Christians today concerns the church. There cannot be much doubt but what many people are considered members of the Body of Christ who have never really been instructed to any great extent in the way of truth. Speech betrays them in this matter. One hears such expressions as "The church of Christ believes," "The church of Christ teaches," "The church of Christ advocates," "Church of Christ preachers," "Church of Christ members," "Church of Christ buildings," "Church of Christ radio and television programs ... Church of Christ publications ... .. Church of Christsters," "I am a church of Christ," "Church of Christ schools," "Church of Christ churches," etc. Before me is one

short article of some two or three hundred words written by a very popular preacher, in some circles, in which the expression "church of Christ" appears about a dozen times. Practically every sentence contains the expression, or its equivalent. Truly, many are practicing "Churchanity" instead of Christianity.

One would be led to believe from the frequency with which the expression "church of Christ" is used that it is found upon every page of the New Testament, when in reality it is found only once, Rom. 16:16, and then it is not used as it is used in the above expressions. Many have taken Paul's statement and made a sectarian name of it.

Christ did not say "Go ye into all the world and preach the church of Christ . . . but rather instructed that "the gospel" be preached to every creature. If "church of Christ preachers" go out and preach "the church of Christ" people are likely to be converted to the "church of Christ" instead of being converted to Christ as a result of preaching the gospel. We do not need, nor does the Lord desire, converts to a church, a body of people, but rather converts to the Lord, to the Cause of the Lord, to His truth! When this is done people will certainly be

identified with the Lord's body, or church, but will not be converted to a group of people, or a popular denomination.

"The church of Christ teaches" is a very frequent utterance used by so many of us, and one which expresses an unscriptural idea, as it is generally used. The only way we can conceive of the church's teaching any thing is from the standpoint of her teaching what is found in the will of Christ. This being true, isn't it reasoning in reverse to say that "the church teaches" it. Isn't it nearer the truth, and easier for people to comprehend to simply say "The Lord, the New Testament or the Bible teaches"? Saying that "the church teaches" has led people to believe that certain doctrines originated with the church thus identified. Beside, when one says "the church of Christ teaches" a certain thing he automatically gives people the idea that every group of people under that name teaches it; when in reality it is not likely true.

So often we hear someone "wax eloquent" by saying "The church of Christ takes the Bible, and the Bible only as its all-sufficient standard of faith and practice, thus you will find unity in the church of Christ." Brethren, this just isn't so! All "churches of Christ" don't take "the Bible and the Bible only" as their all-sufficient standard of faith and practice."

### **DAILY BIBLE READING**

January 29	Exodus 35-37
January 30	Exodus 38-40
January 31	Leviticus 1-3
February 1	Leviticus 4-6
February 2	Leviticus 7-9
February 3	Leviticus 10-12
February 4	Leviticus 13-15

Some even argue that we don't need Bible for everything we do; others not only say such, they practice their philosophy. And another thing, "the churches of Christ" are not united; some are as far apart in both teaching and practice as the poles!

In recent years we have begun to hear people say, when asked what they are religiously, "I'm a church of Christ, or "I'm a church of Christer." If this is not a sectarian concept of the church, what is it? It seems unpopular to identify ourselves as Christians any more, so we try to make ourselves members of some denomination. But someone says, "If I say I am a Christian they'll ask what kind of a Christian." Yes, to be sure! And this gives a wonderful opportunity to preach the gospel, which is also unpopular these days which might be the reason for such unscriptural expressions.

Again, people talk about brethren being "church of Christ preachers." If this doesn't make a denomination of the church, and a denominational preacher out of the preachers what would it take to do it? When we say a brother is a gospel preacher, we tell what he preaches, the gospel. So, likewise when we say a brother is a "church of Christ preacher" we say "he preaches church of Christ." Much more could be said, but let this serve as a strong warning to use "Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you (Tit. 2:8).

- James P. Needham

Article appeared in Truth Magazine in October 1957

### **NEWS AND NOTES**

Remember the website [www.orcoc.org](http://www.orcoc.org)

Continue studying Galatians for Sunday morning class and Leviticus for Wednesday Bible study.