

CHURCH OF CHRIST

The Church of Christ is an American sect that emerged from the work of Thomas Campbell, his son Alexander, Walter Scott and Barton W Stone in the nineteenth century. This Church has some distinctive doctrines.

It claims to be the true Church founded by Jesus Christ. This is because it feels that it alone has the right interpretation of the Bible and feels that there always have been people who believed what it believed and that this Church was revived through the work of the men listed above. It is congregational in nature with every church making its own decisions.

The Church incorrectly thinks that its doctrines about baptism in water for adults being necessary for salvation, the deity of Jesus Christ and scores of other doctrines that other Christian Churches have that it shares with them are in the Bible. The truth is that they are not. The Church heretically rejects the Bible teaching that salvation is by faith alone even in sins.

The Church teaches the unbiblical doctrine that the Holy Spirit guided the apostles but does not guide people today. They see any idea of God guiding us today as implying that the Bible is incomplete and that there are new revelations equal in authority to the Bible. The Bible solution is to say that the guidance of the Holy Spirit is so subtle and is really only a help to understanding the Bible that it cannot be put on a par with scripture for nobody can be sure if it was a revelation or not and it only draws attention to the Bible. Special revelations like apparitions and charismatic gifts would be different and would undermine the Bible only doctrine for they are not as subtle.

The Church argues that the Holy Spirit does not dwell in Christians personally. In other words, the Holy Spirit is not living inside you like a person. According to it, he is only present in the Christian representively and not actually. In other words, the spirit is represented in the person by faith or submission to God but he is not there. Verses that say Christ lives in us by faith are thought to prove that the Holy Spirit does the same. But Christ could live in us personally by faith and obedience. In other words, he could come to live inside us and be close to us when we invite him by our way of life. And the Spirit could do the same. The Church's doctrine is completely unbiblical. It contradicts the simplest interpretation of the Bible that when it says God dwells in us it means it literally for God could do that and God said in the Old Testament that he filled heaven and earth. The Church philosophically argues that God is omnipresent but not omnipersonal meaning that God is everywhere in the sense that his influence is but he is not personally present everywhere. It equates omnipersonality with pantheism. But God being personally everywhere would not mean that pantheism is true for it is possible to imagine a ghostly mind being present in a statue without it becoming the statue. The Bible does say that God's influence is everywhere but it never says that is what it means by God being everywhere.

The Church insists that the exact name of the Church is the Church of Christ so scripture commands it to call the Church that. But the Bible never calls the Church taken as a whole the Church of Christ. It calls it the Church of God and refers to the churches of Christ. But that's all.

The booklet, Why I Oppose Instrumental Music in Worship, argues that since God can't tell us everything that is wrong he gives us general principles which we can use to work things out for ourselves. So, we should create rules that are not in the Bible. We should not use instruments in worship for the Bible never commands it. They say that Cain thought he could please God with his sacrifice yet God rejected it (Genesis 4) to illustrate the point they want to make. They see that 2 John 9 says that we must not go further than what is written. The Early Church did not use instruments. Pope Vitalian who died in 672 started the practice of the Church using instruments and the instrument his Church favoured was the organ (Chambers Encyclopaedia, Vol 7, page 112). John Calvin and John Wesley believed that it was sin to use musical instruments and that it was as bad as using incense in worship. The Church of Christ believes that Psalm 150 and 1 Chronicles 29:25 command instrumental worship but don't believe its right in the New Testament Church because it was never explicitly commanded. This doesn't seem logical. It is more likely that if it had been banned after being commanded in the Old Testament that the New Testament would say so. They then argue that the Old Testament commanded a lot of things that were not explicitly banned in the New but we know we have no authority to do them. For example, we know that incense was a sacrifice to God in the law but if the New Testament bans sacrifice then it follows that incense is banned and it does not have to explicitly forbid it.

I would say that Psalm 150 is like those Psalms that breathe hatred. It is only an inspired record of human feeling which is not the same thing as the God who inspires the words approving of what it commands. The Prophets in Chronicles who commanded instruments were not said to be true prophets. They might have been the inferior charismatic prophets of God who had no authority expect to draw attention to the true infallible and scripture-writing prophets. I see no authority in the Bible for instrumental music.

It is hard to imagine why anybody would want to join the Church of Christ with its ban on instrumental music during

worship, its ban on dancing, sexy clothes, abortion, homosexuality and everything that might make you happy. It doesn't even give you a God who lives inside you to be close to you and be your intimate companion.

Unlike the mainstream Churches, the Church of Christ follows the disciplinary rules of the Bible for dealing with heretics and sinners. They are expelled and so social interaction is permitted. It is only permitted to visit them to appeal to them to change their minds and ways and repent but that is all. The Bible just says that stubborn sinners should be treated this way. It does not say they have to do anything really bad (2 Thessalonians 3:6, Matthew 18:17, Romans 16:17, 2 Thessalonians 3:14, Titus 3:10). They would see that the other Churches do not discipline because discipline will be abused - but anything can be abused - or because of fear - the Bible says that fear and love are incompatible (1 John 4:18) - or because one does not trust God in order to obey him. All these things would be rebellion. The other Churches by no means could be said to be serious about Christianity. 1 Corinthians 5:11 says we are not to eat with sinners. It is not our fault if a sinner lies to us for we can't know everything. And Jesus said we must experience righteous judgement. To withdraw from a sinner is to be done privately and in a congregation and an announcement is to be made (1 Corinthians 5:4). It is argued that we can't withdraw from one who is a family member. On the basis of Ephesians 5, 6, the Church of Christ agrees as long as nothing is done to condone the conduct of the erring person.

Some feel that the parable of the wheat and tares refutes withdrawing for Jesus said we must let them grow together. But this could refer to the fact that the Church will always be a mixture of saints and sinners. It has no relevance to withdrawing for that is only for stubborn sinners. People who fall even seventy times a day are different. The Church of Christ thinks the parable refers to the wheat as being the Church and the tares as being the world.

The Church of Christ thinks that it matches all the Bible's requirements and that makes it the Church of Christ. It cannot be proved that even if it does this that it is the Church of Christ. The Church of Christ has split into several denominations so how is one supposed to know which of these groups has the approval of Christ and is innocent of schism?

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