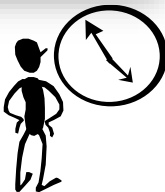


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Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study 9:00 a.m.
Worship 10:00 a.m.
(every other week)

Worship 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p. m.

Three Reasons I Don't Like Denominations

By Wes McAdams

Mahatma Gandhi is quoted as saying, "I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ." If you ask me, I'd say, "I love Christ (and I love you), but I do not like your denominations. Your denominations are so unlike Christ." If you're a member of a denominational church, here are a few things I'd lovingly encourage you to consider.

THE FIRST REASON I DON'T LIKE YOUR DENOMINATION

Let's have an imaginary conversation. This is a conversation similar to one a friend of mine had with his mother, who was a member of a denominational church.

"Does a person have to believe and practice what your denomination teaches in order to be a Christian?"

"No," you would likely reply, "of course not."

Then I would ask, "Does a person have to believe and practice what the Bible teaches in order to be a Christian?"

"Yes, of course," you would likely reply.

"Then you admit," I would finally ask, "your denomination teaches things other than what the Bible teaches?"

Stop and think about it. If a person doesn't have to believe everything the "United Church of Whatever" teaches, but they have to believe everything the Bible teaches, then the "United Church of Whatever" is teaching things other than what is in the Bible. That's the first reason I don't like your denomination because it teaches things other than what the Bible teaches.

THE SECOND REASON I DON'T LIKE YOUR DENOMINATION

Do you know the very idea of denominationalism is rooted in divisions? When you divide something up into segments and name each part, you have “denominated” it. For example, we do that with coins; a quarter is a denomination of a dollar.

Religious denominationalism says it’s ok to divide the body of Christ into sub-groups and name each group according to what they believe, teach, and practice. That may sound like a good idea to man, but I assure you Christ does not think that butchering His bride into pieces is a good idea. In I Corinthians 1-3, Paul chastised the Corinthian church for its division. He said they were unspiritual people (I Corinthians 3:1). He warned them not to destroy God’s temple – the church – or God would destroy them (I Corinthians 3:16-17).

I realize you might not personally be a divisive person, but denominationalism is by its very nature divisive. That’s another reason I don’t like your denomination because it teaches that it’s OK to divide the body of Christ.

THE THIRD REASON I DON’T LIKE YOUR DENOMINATION

The whole idea behind denominations is that they have a *unique* set of beliefs, practices, and teachings that set them apart from other groups. So people end up asking each other, “What does your church teach about...?” Then people choose the church that teaches what they like or prefer. No matter what you want to believe or do, you can probably find a denomination out there that puts its stamp of approval on it. But is that really Christianity?

No, that’s not Christianity. Christianity doesn’t have a smorgasbord of different churches you can choose from, depending on your doctrinal slant. That’s why Jesus sent the Spirit to guide the apostles into all truth (John 16:13), and they went about teaching the same thing in every city and town. “*For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church*” (I Corinthians 4:17) Note that Paul taught the same thing in every church, not different things in different denominations.

Denominationalism has taught the world that you can do, believe, and teach anything and call it Christianity, but nothing could be further from the truth. Christianity – its doctrines, worship, and lifestyle – cannot be redefined or altered. If it isn’t the Christianity of the New Testament, it isn’t Christianity at all. Read Galatians 1 and then tell me what the Lord would have to say about having a unique set of beliefs, practices, or teachings that differed in any way from what was originally taught by the inspired apostles. “*I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel*” (Galatians 1:6).

If all denominations taught just what the Bible taught, they would all be united. So it is obvious that they do not all teach just what the Bible teaches, which means they

must teach different gospels.

That's the third reason I don't like your denomination because it is contributing to the idea that people can attend the denominational church of their choice and believe different doctrines.

JUST BECAUSE I DON'T LIKE YOUR DENOMINATION DOESN'T MEAN I DON'T LIKE YOU

Just so you know, I still like you. In fact, I love you. I hope I have not hurt you, but I do hope something I've said may cause you to rethink your association with a denomination.

And just so you know, there are many of us who are not members of a denomination. We are just Christians. We meet with congregations that are completely autonomous and don't answer to a conference or a headquarters. We are simply doing our best to follow the Bible and only the Bible and be the church of the New Testament. We hope you'll join us. I love you and God loves you.

The Bible Doesn't Say, "Don't Do It," Does it?

By Wayne Jackson

Solomon once wrote that "*there is no new thing under the sun*" (Ecclesiastes 1:9). Certainly that saying is true with reference to the arguments that a swelling "progressive" element within the church is employing in defense of the idea that the use of musical instruments is permissible in Christian worship. Or at the very least, they allege, the issue is not one that should prevent fellowship between churches of Christ and denominational groups that use the instrument.

Professors in several colleges are attempting to argue this case, and a number of churches already have begun incorporating the instrument into their services. An even greater number contend that the matter is of no consequence, and there is little doubt that these will have the instrument in the not-distant future.

It once was the case that those who advocated the instrument attempted to make arguments that were at least remotely related to the biblical text. But those arguments proved to be so baseless that most of them have been abandoned. The mantra now appears to be that stale quip, "The Bible doesn't say, 'don't do it.'"

One cannot but believe that with some of these folks it would not matter if the Bible explicitly stated, "You must not use mechanical music in Christian worship." They would do it anyway, for they are "will-worshippers" (Colossians 2:23) who are enamored with carnality, rather than truth.

Imagine for a moment the following scenario. A man takes his car into an automotive repair shop. He informs the proprietor that the vehicle is not running smoothly and he wants a tune-up. When the customer returns the following day, he is presented

with a bill for more than \$2,000. In addition to the tune-up, the repairman installed new brakes, a muffler, a carburetor, a fuel pump, and a new set of tires. The customer is enraged and protests: "I did not authorize these extra expenditures!" "I know that," the mechanic responds, "but you did not say not to do it." Suppose the case is taken to court. How do you reckon a judge would rule?

The issue is one of authority. While we recognize that there are many laws in the Bible that are explicitly negative, one may not draw the inference that everything is permitted that is not specifically condemned.

In the table of the Ten Commandments, the Lord said regarding "graven images," i.e., idol gods, "you shall not bow yourself down to them" (Exodus 20:5). But what if some renegade Hebrew simply "stood" before an idol and prayed? Do you suppose that if he had done such, and made the defense, "He said, 'don't bow'; he didn't say, 'don't stand?'" Do you suppose the Lord would have been impressed with such a depraved defense?

Can reasonable people not mentally anticipate the logical consequence of this type of reasoning? It throws wide open the gates of apostasy. Consider the following questions that surely could be posed by modern innovators.

- 1) Why can't we pray to Mary and the saints? The Bible doesn't explicitly condemn it.
- 2) Why can't we observe communion on Saturday? The Bible doesn't say not to.
- 3) Why can't we have Pepsi and pizza for communion? The Bible doesn't forbid it.
- 4) Why can't we baptize babies? The New Testament doesn't censure it.
- 5) Why can't we smoke marijuana in worship? No text prohibits it.

It has become increasingly apparent that not only do we see a new generation emerging that knows practically nothing about the Scriptures, but largely it is a people that cannot reason. Logic, to them, is like an alien language.

For many, their entire religious emphasis (under a leaky umbrella they call "spiritual") is one of feelings, self-centeredness, and an appeal to the carnal.

Why Did God Make Me Deaf?

By Jeffrey W. Hamilton

Question: "Why did God make me deaf suddenly a few years ago?"

I try to do good for others. I looked after my mum when she had cancer and I worked in aged care because I care. Then I sprained my ankle, got uveitis (eye inflammation), and lost my hearing only months apart in the same year.

I cried and cried and asked God why? I never got an answer.

Then I tried to sue the doctor for not giving me the right medication or sending me to the hospital. That failed too. Now I can't see Jesus as a curer or helper. He has let me down.

I still believe there's a God, but don't know who or what He is. I believe in angels too. Just not Jesus."

Answer: *"As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?' Jesus answered, 'It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him'"* (John 9:1-3).

People have a false idea that good things happen to people because they are owed it for being good and that bad things happen because they are being punished for being bad. This is the basic theme of the Book of Job. Job lost nearly everything he had, even though he was a righteous man. His friends accused him of sin, though they had no evidence of him committing a sin. By the end of the book, Job is not told why he suffered so greatly.

The Bible tells us that there are a variety of reasons why people suffer and many have nothing to do with the person. Thus, I cannot tell you why you lost your hearing.

However, I do see someone who has become bitter. From the time we are born, we know that, eventually, we will die. We are only passing through this world to a better land. This world is filled with suffering and grief, but that can be born when we know where we are headed.

You, however, have turned against the Lord because you didn't get the life that you wanted. You want to blame someone for what has happened and you settled on blaming the only one who can save you and bring you to eternal life. *"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me'"* (John 14:6). You don't get to pick and choose who you accept as God.

"But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:10-13).

"Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, 'For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:35-37).



"Only used once. Definitely pet-friendly."

Blind to the Truth

By Matthew W. Bassford

Upton Sinclair once said, “It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends on his not understanding it.” Few better illustrations of this truth exist than the behavior of the craftsmen of Ephesus in Acts 19. They, along with everyone else in the city, are familiar with the miraculous powers of Paul and the large numbers of Ephesians who are coming to Christ. However, the craftsmen are much more interested in income than in eternal life. Because Paul’s success means that they can’t make as much money from selling idolatrous shrines, rather than obeying the gospel themselves, they start a riot to oppose it.

Still today, there are plenty of people who would rather serve Mammon than the Lord. Consider the man who lies because his boss expects it or the woman who never attends Sunday services because she works every weekend. To their number, we can add the denominational preachers who invest countless hours in trying to explain away passages like Acts 22:16 but won’t spend five minutes trying to figure out what it means. I’ve known exceptions, but most people who are required to maintain a doctrinal position to keep their job will continue to maintain it in the face of overwhelming Scriptural evidence.

However, money is far from the only thing that can blind our eyes to the truth. There are few passages that are as straightforward as Matthew 19:9. I’ve studied the verse with any number of couples before they even obeyed the gospel. Not once has any of those Biblical novices had any trouble figuring out what the text means, even when it had dire implications for their own marriage.

Ironically, the people I’ve encountered who struggle with comprehension in Matthew 19:9 have much more Scriptural experience than that. 99 percent of the time, they’ve got a problem. They’re unscripturally divorced. They’re unscripturally remarried. They’ve got a loved one who is unscripturally divorced or remarried.

Then, with such powerful motivation, they return to “restudy” the text. The ones who know enough about Greek to get into trouble, use their Greek to do exactly that. Others engage in massive Scriptural-reinterpretation projects. I’ve seen novella-length papers arguing that Christians are still under the Law of Moses, written with the sole goal of applying Deuteronomy 24 to modern marriages instead of Matthew 19. Sadly, none of this changes the teaching of Matthew 19:9 or what the Lord will do on the day of judgment.

It’s easy for us to shake our heads at how easily others fall into self-deception in their study of the Scriptures. However, these things should call us not to arrogance, but to watchfulness and fear. If others who are knowledgeable about and even devoted to the word can make such grievous errors, none of us are exempt! Money, family, and even the fear of what others might think can render us equally blind. Only through awareness of our own vulnerability and stern commitment to the truth can we avoid stumbling ourselves.