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Recommended Citation

Tate, Benjamin W., "Why I Am a Member of the Church of Christ" (1950). *Stone-Campbell Books*. 517.
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Why I Am a Member of the Church of Christ

By BENJ. W. TATE



The New Testament Tract Society

Box 39, Station N, Cincinnati, O.

Why I Am a Member

of the Church

of Christ

BY REV. W. W. WALKER



The New Testament

Published by the

WHY I AM A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

By **BENJ. W. TATE**

MEN take little or no time to investigate, and rush through life as members of denominational churches without any Bible reason for membership in man-made institutions. We should always be ready and able to give a reason for the hope we have in Christ. If one church is as good as another, why 12 kinds of Presbyterians, 15 kinds of Methodists, 16 kinds of Baptists and 164 denominations masquerading under the name of Christianity? There are human institutions galore, each presenting its claims as to efficiency and leadership. There are competitive building programs and plans of service in all our cities and rural communities commanding the support of life, talent and money. The Bible speaks of but one church—the church of Christ—and has but one program of building and service.

I have no apology to offer for claiming membership in the church of Christ. There are many reasons why I endeavor to get men to aspire to be members of the church of Christ, but I shall endeavor to present

only eight reasons why I am a member of the church of Christ.

THE FOUNDATION.

The real value of buildings and institutions depends upon the type and construction of the foundation. Master builders in the material world give much time and consideration to the construction of foundations upon which buildings are to rest. Our cities make certain demands as to foundation of buildings. And while the Bible speaks firmly as to the foundation upon which the church of Christ is builded, men rush on and give no heed to the foundation upon which they build spiritually. If the building of our life, or religious institution to which we belong, goes no deeper than man for its foundation, it is of the sandy type, and will fall in the testing period. The rain and the storm of doubt and fear will fall upon the foundations upon which we build, and they will fail unless we build upon the rock, Christ the Lord. Our great master builder declared He would build His church upon a rock, and that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matt. 16:18). Paul tells us that we are builded upon the one foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone. Christ is the corner-stone of our salvation, the rock of our defense, the one foundation for the church.

The church of Christ presents to the soul of man the divine, efficient foundation. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 3:11). Others may build upon the foundations of men, but my preference and

loyalty shall ever be to the church with the divine foundation, upon which we are builded into the eternal program and institution of God. If I build upon Swedenborg, Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Campbell, Joe Smith or Mrs. Eddy, I establish myself against the divine foundation, and find that I am out of harmony with the Bible plan. Human foundations foster discord, and are the allies of man-made plans that divide the people of God. May the day soon come when all human foundations shall become consumed as hay and stubble by the true fires of revelation.

THE CREED.

Denominational creeds must tumble, and be laid to rest in the scrapyard of denominational names and issues. Human creeds cause divisions in Christendom. We never can unite upon a human creed. Some one has said: "The creeds of men have their day and cease to be." The divine creed is the same yesterday, to-day and forever. I am glad to be a member of the church of Christ, because it has no creed but the living Christ, the one upon which all can unite, the one revealed from heaven. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." Peter, to whom this statement was made at the transfiguration, in response to the question, "Whom say ye that I am?" replied: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." He was present when Heaven proclaimed the deity of Jesus, and expressed the Christian's creed in that profound confession. This is the one creed that needs no revision. Human creeds have

been revised from time to time to fit into the changing opinions of men.

The result of creed-writing has been disastrous and sinful, resulting in division. It will continue to hold the people of God apart. Man must give up written creeds and dogmas and accept the divine creed before there can be unity of life in Christ. Let us turn from men and give Christ the pre-eminence. If one group or company of men has a right to write a creed, other groups have a right to write creeds, and in the making of creeds there would be no end, and soon the world itself could not contain them. The church of Christ accepts no creed but the one authorized by the Bible: "Jesus is the Christ."

I believe in repentance, because of my faith in Jesus, who said: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." I believe in baptism, because I believe in Jesus, who authorized and commanded it. I believe in the prayer life, because I believe in Jesus, who spent whole nights in prayer. I believe in the growth of Christian life and experience, because I believe in Jesus, who "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." I believe in missionary activity, because I believe in Jesus, who said: "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 condemned." I believe that I must do what the apostles commanded men to do to be saved, because I believe in Jesus, who said: "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John 20:23).

THE HEAD.

The foundation, the creed and the head are fundamentals, and all center in Christ. The Pope is not the head of the church of Christ, neither can bishops or ministers be the head of the church. I have heard members of the church speak of the minister as the head of the church. He is only the servant of the church in spiritual leadership. Paul tells us in the Epistle to the Ephesians that Christ is the head of the church, and the church should be subject to His will. There is no authority above this supreme head, for "all authority, both in heaven and on earth," is within His hands.

My hand moves out and down and up because it is controlled by the mind in the head. I walk, move, think and act because I have will-power, the seat of which is in the head. The church of Christ must act as a body of believers—go, grow and serve—because we are directed so to do by the divine will. I am a member of His body, and I am willing to be a foot to go where He wants me to go, a hand to do what He wants me to do, a mouth to speak what He wants me to speak, an eye to see the opportunities of service, an ear to hear the call of duty, a finger-tip to touch some soul and bring it a bit closer to God. It is ours to serve as members of the body over which Jesus reigns as the divine head.

We must not lose the fact that Jesus is the head. Our local and missionary societies must recognize the divine head and speak where He speaks, and be silent where He is silent, and go as He would go, and preach as He would preach were He here in

person. God has one method of saving the world, and that method is through the body of Christ, which is subject to the supreme head.

THE DISCIPLINE.

The church of Christ has a discipline. It is not a book written by men in convention, but the never-changing word of God. If the discipline of your church contains more than the Bible, it contains too much, and adds to the word of God; if it contains less, it takes away from the Bible, and if it contains the same, then it is not necessary. Discipline of men should be annihilated at once. It is more essential that there should be haste in the blotting out of disciplines than it is that nations should disarm. When Christendom unites on the divine discipline, the Bible, this old world will soon be conquered by the sword of the Spirit, and then war will be no more and peace and righteousness will cover the earth as the water covers the sea.

The Bible is the never-changing discipline upon which all can unite. Others may be written and changed from time to time, but not so with the Bible—it is the same to-day, to-morrow and forever. I have a right to reject what a group of men may try to make binding on Christendom, but I have no right to reject what God makes binding through Christ. Cardinals, popes, bishops, councils and elders may continue to legislate and divide the church, but not with my approval. The word of God, plus nothing, minus nothing, is sufficient for me. Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians (1:2), proclaims a curse upon those who speak

another gospel: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

The New Testament contains the only authority as to the rule of faith and life. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John cluster around the personal life and cross of Jesus. "These were written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ" (John 20:31). They established us in the faith of Christ, the Son of God. The Book of Acts tells us how the apostles received men into fellowship, and forever settles the open-membership question. We make no mistake when we follow the teaching of the apostles, who spoke by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Epistles that follow the Book of Acts tell us how to discipline our lives in the church of God. They tell us how to grow and develop the prayer life and become efficient in the use of the strong spiritual food. The Book of Revelation tells us of the things past, present and future in the experience of the church of Christ on earth. The educated and the uneducated, the rich and the poor, the high and the low can find common ground upon which to stand in the Bible. All should submit to the authority of the divine disciplinarian, as revealed in the word of God, and reject man-made disciplines.

THE NAME.

I am a member of the church of Christ because it recognizes Bible names for Bible things. We are informed that the church is His body; therefore we should wear His name. We do an injustice to the church

when we assume other names than those revealed in the Bible. We overstep our privileges in Christ when we claim to be members of "The Disciple Church." "There ain't no such animal" in our midst. I am a disciple of the Lord, a Christian, a servant; but, as to church membership, I am a member of the church of Christ, plus nothing, minus nothing.

God promised, through Isaiah, to call His people by a new name, and that name was given at Antioch (Acts 11:26). Peter did not say: "If any one suffer as a Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Catholic, Campbellite, or any other kind of an ite, let him not be ashamed." He did say: "If any one suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed." We can never unite upon human names. Before the union of God's people all names, save Bible names, must be discarded. Great groups of men will not consent to the name "Methodist;" others will not wear the names "Lutheran" or "Presbyterian;" but all can agree on the Bible name, the name of all names, "Christian." I am a member of the church of Christ because it has no handle as a prefix to the name "Christian."

SCRIPTURAL BAPTISM.

There is no Scripture suggesting that Christ or the apostles ever commanded water to be sprinkled on a person to unite that soul to Christ. Baptism commanded in the New Testament suggests: (1) A form of birth (John 3:3-5); (2) much water (John 3:23); (3) a human administrator (Matt. 28:19); (4) a going into the water (Acts 8:38); (5) a coming up out of the

water (Acts 8:39); (6) representation of death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:3, 4); (7) a planting (Rom. 6:5). Just how any one can claim all these requirements supplied in sprinkling is beyond the power of finite mind to reason. Others may substitute, but nothing but that which meets all these Bible requirements will suffice for me. I can not be a member of an institution claiming to be a church that accepts anything but Scriptural baptism.

I am a member of the church of Christ because it believes and teaches that immersion in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is Christian baptism. All are satisfied that when thus immersed they have been baptized into Christ. Authority for sprinkling goes back to the Pope in 1311, while authority for immersion goes back to Christ and the apostles. I feel satisfied when I go beyond the authority of man to the authority of the divine. Some men say that sprinkling and pouring will do, but what does the Bible say? We can never unite until we accept the Bible on baptism.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The Lord's Supper is a divine institution. We have no authority to invite nor debar, for it is the Lord's. It belongs to His people, and the only examination mentioned is self-examination. The early disciples met together upon the first day of the week to break bread (Acts 20:7). When God said, "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy," His people understood that it meant every Sabbath day. I know I am safe if I use the same judgment and keep the Lord's memorial institution every first day of the

week. The burden of proof rests upon those who claim that once each week is too often.

The church of Christ claims that it should be observed every Lord's Day as a part of the regular worship. I am glad to be a member of the church that follows the example of the early disciples as to the communion service. The primary object of the coming together of the disciples was to commune with the Lord.

THE UNION OF GOD'S PEOPLE.

Nothing is said in the Bible as to the uniting of churches of various creeds, for such churches were not known in Bible times. Federation was not the method, and it has failed. The Interchurch Movement was not of God, and has passed away, and is stranded on the wrecks of time. The unity of the faith; accepting Christ as the foundation, creed and head of the church; the Bible as the discipline, Bible names for Bible things, Scriptural baptism, the Lord's Supper observed as in apostolic times—is the only plea and principle upon which God's people can unite. The great Restoration movement, "Back to Christ," is of God, and is destined to bring us to the divine goal in unity.

I am a member of the church of Christ that fosters no plan that will divide the church of God. Our plea, "In faith, unity; in opinion [when faith and truth are not ignored], liberty," is broad enough for all who recognize the authority of the Bible.

WATERLOO, Ia.