

*"Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you?
Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" 1 Cor. 1: 13*

"TO WHAT CHURCH DO YOU BELONG?"

- Booklet VI -

*"Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call
on the Lord out of a pure heart." 2 Timothy 2. 22, note verses 25,26.*

*"Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world constitutes
himself an enemy of God."* James 4: 4

To What Church Do You Belong?

MY DEAR READER, in God's providential dealings this leaflet has been placed in your hands. Permit me to explain that the above question is not directly addressed to you : in fact the question is not mine at all, but one **that** has been repeatedly put to me, **nevertheless** I acknowledge, as I think all thoughtful persons should, that it is an important question, and one that should not be treated lightly. A truthful answer, which I gladly record here, is rightly expected of me. May I plead with you to read it carefully and to compare it with the answer that you would readily give?

The Church that I belong to, and form part of, is of such a nature that no one **can** join it; neither can any member of it at any time, or in any circumstances whatsoever, **leave** it, and what is more, **no one can be**, and therefore never will be, excommunicated from it. There is only **one way** into it, and there is **no way** out of it.

It began on earth well-nigh two thousand years ago, and when it is completed it will be taken to Heaven, to be forever with its Owner and Builder, the Lord Jesus, Who whilst He was upon this earth said: "Upon this rock I will build **My Church**" *Matthew 16. 18*. He is not only its sole owner and builder, but **He** is its **Head**, *Ephesians 1: 22*.

How large is its membership ? "A great number that no man can number," and they are "out of all nations and kindreds, and people and tongues;" everyone of these – irrespective of their class, creed or colour – have been brought in by the same way.

How? By Baptism? No, dear friend; the dying thief on

Golgotha's hill was brought in without baptism, but not without **Birth**, THE NEW BIRTH; of which the Lord Jesus spoke to Nicodemus when He said: "Except a man be **born again**, he **cannot** see the Kingdom of God," *John* 3: 3.

Peter writes of those who were "**born again** by incorruptible seed, the Word of God," and shows that such **born again** ones are **living** stones in the **Church**, the Church that the Lord Jesus loved and purchased with His own blood, the Church that He will yet present to Himself in the Glory, *Ephesians* 5: 25-27.

That is the Church to which I belong; that is the Church of which I am a member. May I earnestly ask you, my dear reader, are **you** in **this** Church?

Or are you in **another** because of your natural birth, or "baptism"? or have you **left** the Church of your early days and chosen to **join another** ?

Or is it possible that my reader is one of those who with callous complacency emphasises his or her abhorrence of "the Church," as a consequence of the many "hypocrites" associated therewith. I readily concede that there are hypocrites identified with what men call "the Church," but strange as it may seem, nevertheless it is true, there can be no hypocrites in the Church which I am seeking to bring before you, for all who are in it, are in it as a result of **Birth**, that was brought about by the Holy Spirit.

Hence that must of necessity rule out not only all works of deceitful persons, but also every work of the most devoted.

Remember, oh do remember, that unless you are part of **the Church** that you cannot **join** nor **leave**, nor yet be turned out of, then you are **NOT born again**, and you are **NOT** on your way to Heaven, and you can **NEVER** be there.

Where then will **you** be? Don't, oh **don't** thrust the question aside; the awful reality of being in Hell is not got rid of so easily. Wait a moment. Here is good news, is it not for you?

“Christ Jesus came into the world to **SAVE** sinners.” Can He not save **you**? He **can**. **Come to Him. Come NOW**, for is it not written: “Behold **NOW** is the accepted time, behold **NOW** is the day of **Salvation**.” 2 *Corinthians* 6: 2.

W. ELLIS.

“What Denomination Are You?”

If this is your question, dear friend, an answer from God's Words may be used by Him to His glory. The word “denomination” simply *means* “name” but it is *employed* in a way that suggests “creeds” and “church arrangements.”

First, as to *a name*. “The Name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8: 12) seems to shut out human names. Into that Name we believed (John 1: 12). Our baptism was into the one Name (Matt. 28: 19). Into His Name we are gathered (Matt. 18: 20). Upon His Name we call (1 Cor. 1: 2). For His Name we are hated (Matt. 10: 22), often in proportion to faithfulness. “The disciples were called (of God) *Christians*” (Acts 11: 26). And we do not forget all the other descriptions *He* has given e.g. saints, children, believers, brethren. But we would not use *any* in a proud way, nor are we linked with existing *organizations* to which the *Scriptural* names “Disciples,” and “Brethren” have been attached, (to our grief), although many born from above may be found therein. We, by grace, belong to Christ, and would not utter these solemn words in an off-hand or self-righteous way, to mislead enquirers, but

only to avoid personal sin – sectarianism. Hence we will gladly go on to *explain* a little of the precious truth most surely believed among us, for “the *hidden* things of dishonesty” do not please God, and we would be always ready to give an account of the hope that is within us, only pausing to ask if you, dear reader, have passed out of death into life (John 5: 24), or if you only have a mental interest and curiosity as to the things of God ? Oh, that you, too, may rejoice in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and in the blessedness of a child of God for ever and ever.

We believe that “all sinned,” in Adam, and that all are “children of wrath” by nature, and sinners by practice, till it pleases God (Gal. 1: 15, 1 John 4: 19), – for none have merits (Rom. 3: 10) – to give an anxiety about sin, and a wish for the salvation and rest to which He freely calls the “heavy laden.” This we find in the precious Words of our Triune God, given by His own inspiration, to make His people “wise unto salvation;” where also we see that the redeemed are quite “a new creation” in Christ, having the righteousness He made for many (Isa. 53: 11) and being represented in Him “at the right hand of God.” Thus we learn that it is ours to show His virtues, and to “worship in spirit and in truth”, pleasing and shining for Him in the midst of “a crooked and perverse generation”, to whom any *sent* of the Lord (Rom. 10: 10) should preach, resting on *Himself* (1 Cor. 1: 18-21; 2: 4). Hence we do not expect anything but a “strait gate” and “narrow way”, but amid all, we are conscious of the wonderful privileges of the *present* day, when the Lord has shed light on His way of mercy through the gospel, so much clearer than the appointed Levitical “types” and “shadows” (Heb. 10: 1). Moreover, we have received “the Spirit of sonship”, and, “if we remain under, we shall reign” with Christ, with special glory, when He returns : – not to save all, and not because all will be

saved, but to receive His people, destroy Antichrist, and establish His own Kingdom, with its centre at Jerusalem. Saints who have fallen asleep will share the blessedness, with rewards or loss according to works (1 Cor. 3: 15) but the ungodly will not be raised till the thousand years are over, when heaven and earth shall pass away, and the Lord will punish sinners justly, for ever and ever.

We cannot meet on any popular denominational basis (John 21: 15) but, emphasizing believers' immersion, as an act of loving obedience, and with a view to assurance and further fellowship with the Lord, we are gathered weekly on the Lord's Day *evening* to break unleavened bread (as He said, "Do this"), and to drink of the fruit of the vine, in godly order, without priest or president or elaborate service (Acts 2: 42). Moreover, we would not forsake the assembling of ourselves together whenever enabled (Mal. 3: 16). We believe the saved ones in any town should be especially united, acting together, being represented and guided by an evangelist, like Timothy (2 Tim. 4: 5) or by elders (and deacons), as soon as the Lord raises up any such (Tit. 1: 5) according to His people's prayer and prayerful preparation, *within* the definite restrictions of 2 Tim. 3: the elders being called to their solemn oversight by the (itinerant) evangelist, responsible for the church. The children of God in surrounding "places" (1 Cor. 1: 2) are linked with those in any central city, which itself may have many *meeting rooms*, where the Lord's Table would be spread (Acts 2: 46), but be one assembly. We regard the Holy Scriptures as complete and authoritative in all matters of discipline &c (1 Cor. 4: 17, 1 Tim. 3: 15). Diverging teachers, open ministry in days of weakness, occasional communion, hymn singing by or to the ungodly, musical instruments, and intercommunion with merely professing churches – we cannot

see to be the Mind or Word of the Lord. If any exercised about obedience, in view of the Kingdom, desire further particulars or help, being ready for separation from popular systems, and Scriptural adding to a despised gathering and object, correspondence will be welcome. "We must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ" (2 Cor. 5: 10). It is a solemn thing to will to do the Lord's will (John 7: 17). It is hard to give up prejudices and customs. If *not* thus concerned, dear reader, one message more. If you are among "the called of Jesus Christ", what "denomination" are *you*? Can you find *your* arrangements in the Holy Scriptures? Where is a *state* church there? Where is sprinkling of infants? Where are elders with unsaved children? Where is the authority for the Lord's *Supper* in the morning? Where have you warrant for partaking without identifying yourself with the work with which it is connected (1 Cor. 10: 17)? Will you not weigh these things before God? And if, by grace, you become unsettled, with loving earnestness, in view of His love and the day of which Matt. 5: 19, 2 Cor. 5: 10 speaks (referring to *believers*), we would urge you to renounce a sectarian name and position, and hating all worldliness, to come and heartily help in a simple, childlike, wholehearted, disciplelike return to the Lord's own arrangements for the people He has purchased with His own blood (See Tit. 2. 12-14).

P.W. Heward

The Lord Jesus said: -

"If ye love ME, keep MY commandments." John 14: 15

It is written again: -

"Now I beseech you brethren, by the NAME of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, that ye all speak the same thing." 1 Cor. 1: 10

Should a Church Be Composed Of Only Christians?

Many would perhaps give a hasty answer to this question and say, "Of course a Church is composed only of Christians, and is this not the case everywhere?" Others would answer more circumspectly and say, "No, you cannot expect everyone in a Church to be a Christian." Those giving the former type of answer would be those who fail to see the necessity of the **new birth** and who consider that a mere profession of Christianity is enough to constitute a Church member. Those giving the latter answer would be such as see the need for regeneration by the Holy Spirit, but who have become reconciled to Churches which have in their midst members, perhaps many or few, who do not in actual fact know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. This is an important question, and we propose to consider it from a Scriptural standpoint in order that we may arrive at a true answer which can satisfy the conscience.

We will not spend much time in examining the first of the answers submitted above. Many people who make no religious profession at all are wise enough to know that in most Churches there are true Christians and counterfeit ones. How much more is an instructed believer aware that not all profession of Christianity is sincere, and that not all Churches are composed completely of Christians. The second answer, however, calls for a closer inspection for it represents the thinking of many who are engaged in some form of Church activity and who think that way in all sincerity. Is it true, then that God intended that a Church should house unbelievers as well as true believers?

First of all, just what is the Church? We trust there is no need for a detailed explanation to affirm that it is not a building of wood or stone or brick; nor is it any one denomination or confederation of such. The Church, in essence, is simply believers in the Lord Jesus Christ; those who have been redeemed by His precious blood, and who have appropriated salvation by faith in His name. When the Church is finally manifested in glory, there will not be a single one there who has not truly received the Lord Jesus as Savior; nor will there be a single one lacking who has been truly born again of His Spirit and received eternal life according to His promise. If this then is the Church in glory, should we not expect that its local representation is to approximate that heavenly body in its composition and expression?

It may be argued (as the writer heard a prominent teacher in New York give answer to the question which we are considering) that the Lord said that the tares must grow together with the wheat until the harvest. It is true the Lord did say this (Matt. 13: 30), but a close reading of the context will show that the setting is not the Church, but the world (v. 38 "The field is the world ..."). No efforts are to be made by the followers of Christ to purge the world of unbelievers in this present dispensation. The case is not so, however, when we come to the Church in its local aspect.

The Churches addressed by Paul in his various epistles – and are these not patterns of what Churches should be? – were made up of those who were designated by such terms as these: "beloved of God, called to be saints" (Rom. 1: 7), "the church of God ... with **all** the saints which are in all Achaia" (2 Cor. 1: 1), "them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus ..." (1 Cor. 1: 2) and "the saints and faithful brethren in Christ ..." (Col. 1: 2). Even

allowing for the presence of some unbelievers in these Churches, it is evident the great majority in them were believers to whom such terms of address could be reasonably applied. It is clear that in Paul's conception of things – and he truly reflected the mind of Christ – a Church was to be composed only of true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. The question can then be asked, did the Holy Spirit through Paul make any provision for the purging out of an unbelieving element from the Church?

In answer to this question, we refer to a very striking statement which occurs in 1 Cor. 5: 7, “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump as ye are unleavened ...” is this not sufficient evidence that a Church is to be equipped with spiritual authority to deal with all that savors of leaven, a well-known type of sin? To demonstrate this authority, Paul himself, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, delivered an offender in the Church unto Satan (1 Cor. 5: 5) and followed this up by commanding the Church to remove the wicked person from their midst. This was not merely an isolated instance, but a pattern for the action of a Church in dealing with evil and evil doers in its midst. Indeed, much of the teaching of the New Testament is supplementary to this very principle. How is it then that we face a condition today where we see churches with a greater or less degree of unregenerated members accepted as such and nothing being done about it? Have not the words of 1 Cor. 5: 6 “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” taken on a prophetic significance with regard to many Churches ?

The main reasons for such a condition are not very hard to find. Unspiritual men with a desire to build up large Churches contributing to their material prosperity, influence and renown,

have watered down the keen edge of the Gospel message and made it easy for people to join the Church. A shallow type of evangelism has opened up the way for many to profess Christianity and to become identified with a Church, being considered as members on the strength of their profession. Even when there has been sound preaching by sincere and earnest preachers, mere professors have not been lacking and have quickly found their way into Churches of a certain type which are ever ready to snatch up proselytes. Here is the point, however, which we desire strongly to emphasize, and that is that Churches, generally speaking, have failed to realize their responsibility to **test out all profession of receiving Christ**. Under pressure of the competition in the religious world to hold members at all costs, the thought of a weeding-out process to separate unbelievers from the true children of God is not compatible with the interests of many churches. The result is that true believers in a Church have been hindered from realizing greater spiritual blessing from the Lord, and even where the unbelieving element in the membership has been small, it has nevertheless acted as a weight on the Church and impeded spiritual progress. Wherever this trend towards an unbelieving membership has not been arrested by Scriptural action, it has finally culminated in the control of the Church passing into the hands of unregenerated men, and that Church has lost its testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ and finally become apostate. Any Church which replaces the teaching of Christ, by which alone its position and testimony can be guarded, with a system of teaching which originates from man's wisdom and aims at giving glory to men rather than to God, is in danger of falling away to this apostate condition. Blessing from the Lord in former days and a rigid holding to fundamentalism

along certain lines is no guarantee that a Church is in a secure position in the eyes of Him “who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks” (Rev. 2: 1). Unless there is a bowing to the whole counsel of God (Acts 20: 27), the roots of corruption will insinuate themselves surely enough. The Church at Ephesus was sound along a good many lines, but the Holy Spirit detected the beginnings of an unscriptural condition in a leaving of their first love (Rev. 2. 1-7), and that Church finally had its candlestick removed.

Can a Church maintain a consistent spiritual condition over a period of time? We believe that the will of God is nothing less than this, and that the Lord Jesus Christ expects **His** Churches to do that very thing **until He comes**. Do not the words of 1 Cor. 11: 26 “For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come” have a significance in this connection? How can an assembly effectively shew the Lord's death unless they are prepared to deal with the elements of corruption at work in their midst by the exercise of spiritual purging according to the Word? The mere observance of the Lord's Supper without the background of a spiritual condition is something which is very grievous in the Lord's sight, and should cause alarm to His true people since it may quite conceivably lead on to the solemn state expressed in the words of 1 Cor. 11. 27-30. While many Churches will doubtless apostatize completely before the Lord comes, there is every reason to expect that the Holy Spirit will stir up a concern in many of the Lord's people to meet together on a Scriptural basis where the principles for Church conduct can be effectively administered in the love and power of the Holy Spirit by those who are led of Him in all humility and faithfulness.

We say with all confidence in the Word of God, that His teaching amply provides for a condition whereby a local Church can be kept spiritually pure, and unbelieving and sinful elements can be eliminated. If any group of Christians who are acting together as a Church can believe this and act on it, there is room there for great spiritual blessings in the days ahead. A local Church is a highly privileged body on whom the Lord is able to set His seal of approval in a very marked way. The Lord, however, is still a jealous God, and He can withdraw those privileges if they are not held and appreciated in the fear of the Lord and the Holy Spirit. The sustaining of a spiritual position by a local Church calls for a constant watchfulness and discernment on the part of all in that Church, but in a particular way by those who have the oversight of the flock. If they become content for unbelievers to appropriate privileges which are not meant for them, by recognizing them as believers in their midst, they can blame only themselves for the consequences. We hope that no one will misunderstand us in thinking we discourage the attendance of an unbeliever at a meeting of the Church, for we do not. Nevertheless, there is a big difference between admission to a meeting, and admission into membership; only the Lord Himself can effectively bring about this latter admission, and we need to watch and see what He does. Another thing to be remembered is that a powerful ministry of the truth, which is directed against evil in all its forms, is sure in the end to convict unbelievers (1 Cor. 14. 24: 25) and they will feel uneasy in remaining, in an unrepentant condition, among believers.

If Churches refuse to test the profession of their members, the time will come when God will test both those Churches and their members. It will then be seen what is the true nature of

the foundation on which they have been building. May we, who, by the grace of God, have some measure of insight into the reality of these things, be concerned to build on the sure foundation of His words (Matt.7. 24-27), not only in that which concerns us as individuals, but also in that which concerns the Lord Jesus Christ in our corporate representation of Him in the locality where we are placed. The testimony to the truth of these things may have to be sustained for a time by ones and twos in some localities, but God is able to give the increase, for He will surely bless all which is done in faithfulness to Him. Only as we are prepared to obey and follow our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ all the way can we be a spiritual power and lead others to the blessing of joy and peace in believing in Him.

Stanley J. Duce

Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon His name.

Malachi 3: 16