

ANNOUNCEMENTS

members of Christ's church.

PRAYER NEEDS: **Health,** Revena, & David Lundy, Kenny & Linda Mitchell, Joann & John Johnson, Lisa Maxwell, Bill Treadway, Alan Johnson, Dennis & Jean Rhodes. **Other:** We need to pray that God will raise up men to aspire to serve as deacons. We need to pray for the leaders of our country, and for those serving in the military. Pray for those saints who are weak and those going through difficult times.

GOSPEL MEETINGS: None known of at this time.

SINGING EVENING: This song service will be on Sunday evening October 10, at 5:00 pm.

EVANGELISM: For those of the Somerville family who would like to participate in the Bible correspondence course work, we will meet on Sunday October 3 & 17 at 6:00 pm

THE SOMERVILLE SOWER
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Schedule of Services
Sunday
Bible class 9:45 a.m.
Morning worship 10:45 a.m.
Evening worship 5:00 p.m.
Wednesday
Bible class 7.00 p.m.

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If you would be interested in a **free** Bible correspondence course, or if you would like a **free** Bible study in your home, or if you have a request for Bible information, please write to the above address or phone one of the above numbers for prompt service.

THE SOMERVILLE SOWER

"The seed is the word of God." (Luke 8:11)

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Christ Is The Founder Of Only One Church

Leroy Brownlow

I. THE PROOF

1. He who has all authority in heaven and on earth said, *"Upon this rock I will build My church..."* (Matt. 16:18). Jesus did not say that He would build a church, His churches or one of His churches. He said, *"I will build My church."* Let us spell it: C-H-U-R-C-H - that is how many Jesus promised to build. Everyone who knows anything at all about the English language as to whether nouns are singular or plural knows that the word *"church"* is singular and means one. It is hard for many good people, in view of present conditions, to be convinced of the oneness of the church; but, the multiplicity of churches about us has no power to alter the words of Christ. He declares : *"My words shall not pass away"* (Matt. 24:35).

2. Paul teaches that there is one body: *"There is one body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling"* (Eph. 4:4). *"For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office: so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another"* (Rom. 12:4,5). *"But now they are many members, but one body"* (1 Cor. 12:20). Paul, as we see, has taught time after time the oneness of the body. Does the body mean the church? We shall see: *"And he put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body"* (Eph. 1:22,23). In this passage Paul tells us that the church is the body. In Col. 1:18 he teaches that the body is the church. So the church is the body and the body is the church. There is only one body; therefore there is only one church. How perfectly this agrees with the promise: *"I will build My church"* (Matt. 16:18).

3. The oneness of the church is also seen in the figure of a vineyard, with God the husbandman (John 15:1). We do not see the picture of many vineyards, being worked by the husbandman in such a way as to conflict with the welfare and growth of each. There are hundreds of religious vineyards in the world today, each claiming God as its husbandman. This is what we see when we lift up our eyes and look at the world, but this is not what we see when we look in the Bible. In it we see one vineyard and one husbandman.

4. This idea of the church is further portrayed in the figure of the vine and branches: Christ the true vine and each redeemed person a branch in the vine (John 15:1-6). We do not see Christ as a plurality of vines with many branches in each vine, each vine and its branches growing in such a way as to conflict with the growth of others. No, this is not what we see at all. We see one great and beautiful vine, Christ, the Son of God, with every saved person a branch in Him, saved by Him and bearing fruit to His honor and glory. How contradictory is the picture of the world and the picture of the Bible.

Man in his desperate attempt to justify denominationalism has tried to tell us that the vine is the original and true church and the branches are the different denominations of the world. This is their number one argument in behalf of denominationalism. A little thinking, however, will reveal that this cannot be true for several reasons: (1) Christ was speaking to His disciples instead of churches when He said, "*I am the vine and you are the branches*" (John 15:5). It is maltreatment of His word to apply a statement to churches when He applied it to men. (2) Christ said, "*Abide in Me*" the true vine. If you are abiding in some branch, then you are guilty of error. Christ did not say, "Abide in some branch;" He said, "*Abide in Me.*" (3) He plainly states that a branch is a man: "*If a man abide not in Me he is cast forth as a branch.*" "...a man ...is ...a branch." English language could not make it plainer. (4) It cannot be true for it does an injury to the parable. It is preposterous and ridiculous to think that on the true vine grow a grape, a watermelon, cucumber, cantaloupe, pumpkin, squash, etc. Thinking persons could never accept a thing as sensible in the spiritual world when it is wholly and unreservedly nonsensical in the natural world; however there is no nonsense so nonsensical as the argument of a theologian who has no Scripture to prove his doctrine.

5. The unity of the church is also presented in the figure of a house or family: "*the house of God, which is the church of the living God*" (1 Tim. 3:15). The house of God means the family of God. For instance, when we read of the jailer and his house being converted we know that it was the jailer and his family (Acts. 16). Also, God's house is God's family; and God's family is God's church. We see in the Bible a vivid picture of a family with God as the Father, Christ the elder brother and all the saved as "*children of God, and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*" (Rom. 8:16,17). We do not see in the Bible a picture of several hundred different families, each more or less conflicting with all the others, each with a distinct government of its own, each wearing its own name, and each claiming the same Father and the same Elder Brother, with each child in every family claiming to be an heir. This would be bigamy. Men ought not by word or deed cast such a reflection upon God. The divine picture is one great united family with God as the Father and Christ as the Elder Brother, and all members working together for the good of the family.

6. This idea of oneness is again portrayed in the figure of the one fold and one shepherd: "*And they shall become one flock, one shepherd*" (John 10:16). We must look in the world instead of the Bible to see many flocks, each claiming to have the same shepherd. God does not picture in His word hundreds of flocks, each with its peculiar kind of sheep, and each more or less at variance with all the others. God says: "One flock, one shepherd." All

the brains, all the wealth, and all the prestige of all the world cannot change His word. There are no more flocks than there are shepherds. It would be just as scriptural to ask a man which shepherd he is following as it would to ask him of which flock he is a member.

7. Consider another figure, please: this time, the figure of the human body. The church is presented in the figure of a human body with Christ as the head and all the redeemed as members of the body, working under the control and direction of the head (1 Cor. 12:12-27; Col. 1:18). One body and one head. In the religious world we see hundreds of bodies, each claiming to have the one head, Christ. What a picture! What a beast or shall we call it a beast? It has no name for it was never heard of in the natural world. It has hundreds of bodies and each body fights all other bodies, and yet each body is guided and directed by the intelligence of one head. Do not get scared - you will never see that kind of a thing in the animal kingdom. But you can see hundreds of warring bodies in the religious world, each claiming to have Christ as its head. Surely, a man has eyes with which he cannot see and ears with which he cannot hear when he accepts this thing as reasonable in the religious world, knowing that it is unreasonable in the natural world.

8. The oneness and unity of God's people is further taught in Christ's prayer unto the Father. Let us study it for a moment: "*Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they may also be in us: that the world may believe that You did send Me*" (John 17:20,21). Jesus prayed that all who believe on Him may be one. This prayer is a cutting rebuke to a plurality of churches. We know that Jesus did not pray for oneness and then turn around and establish many churches to create division. Such fickleness would be the blackest work of hypocrisy. Every time a man says that Jesus is the author of many churches, doctrines and divisions, he accuses the Lord of hypocrisy. It is equivalent to saying that Jesus was not sincere and honest when He went to the Father in prayer in the behalf of oneness. It is an accusation against the purity and integrity of our Redeemer. I cannot appreciate a man's casting that reflection upon my Savior.

Many men have prayed for division. Oh, how many times we have seen preachers go down upon their knees in prayer and have heard them thank God that there are so many churches and doctrines in the world that each person may pick out the one of his choice. This is not the way Jesus prayed. Thus many have drifted far from the spirit of Christ.

II. A PLURALITY OF CHURCHES

Yes, the Bible speaks of "*churches of Christ*" (Rom. 16:16) and "*the seven churches that are in Asia*" (Rev. 1:4). The word churches is here used in a congregational sense. This usage is extant on every hand. We speak of the churches of Christ in the county, but they are all alike, having the same marks of identity. We speak of the seven or any number of churches in a certain territory just as the Holy Spirit spoke of "*the seven churches that are in Asia.*" They all have the "*same mind and the same judgment,*" (1 Cor. 1:10) they all have the same doctrine or teaching. (2 John 9; Rom. 6:17-18)

This should be enough to convince the most incredulous that Christ is the founder of only one church. This being true, we have no choice in the matter and should be content to be