

# The Sin of Denominationalism

by W. Curtis Porter

The results of denominationalism show it to be displeasing to God. Here are a few reasons:

***It Makes Infidels.*** Unity and division have opposite effects. What one builds the other destroys. What one makes the other unmakes. They lead in different directions. Unity among people who believe the Bible to be the Word of God will do much to lead men to God. Jesus prayed: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21). The purpose of unity is here made plain - "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Unity makes believers.

If it is necessary for believers in Christ to be one that the world may believe on him then division is certain to have the opposite effect. Denominationalism is a prolific source of infidelity today. When you think of hundreds of conflicting religions being claimed as authorized by the same book, the Bible, what could one expect but infidelity? Men who reason would not be willing to accept a book that is filled with conflicting ideas. But the Bible must be regarded as such a book if denominationalism is to be accepted.

One church teaches that man is saved by faith alone; another teaches that faith alone is not sufficient. One church claims salvation may be had without any conditions; another teaches that salvation is conditional. Some declare that a child of God can never so act as to be lost at last, while others say he may fall away and be lost. By some it is taught that immersion is the only scriptural form of baptism, but others insist that it may be by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. And yet all claim to get their teaching from the Bible. To endorse denominationalism is to say that all these conflicting theories are true and to regard the Bible as a book of inconsistencies and contradictions, and it results in infidels. But the Bible does not teach all these conflicting doctrines; nor does it endorse the existence of denominations. Unity must be based on Bible teaching (1 John 1:7).

***It Makes God Contradict Himself.*** This is closely allied to the point already discussed. Denominational preachers of all types claim a divine call to their ministry. They claim to be preaching because God in a direct way has called them to preach. But how inconsistent that would make God! According to the claims of denominationalism God calls one man to preach Methodist doctrine and to build up the Methodist Church. He calls another man to preach Baptist doctrine and to build up the Baptist Church. Another is called to advance the cause of Presbyterianism. And yet another to preach the Pentecostal doctrine. And on and on it goes, with men called to preach the conflicting doctrines of all religious bodies in Christendom. And the whole thing is charged up to God. He has called one man to deny what he has called another man to preach. Can you believe a thing like that? If you believe that denominationalism is of God, that is what you must believe. I am frank to say that I do not believe it. God does not contradict himself. Anything that makes God contradict himself is sinful.

***It Declares God's Way Is Not Sufficient.*** Paul said to Timothy: "All scripture is given by

inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). This shows the all-sufficiency of God's way. The Word of God is a perfect rule of faith and practice. Nothing in addition to it is needed. It will furnish the man of God to all good works, and what more could we want than that? Yet denominationalism is not satisfied with the way of God. They have formulated their disciplines, manuals, articles of religions, confessions of faith, and creeds to supplement the Word of God. Such action declares God did not give to the world a perfect system, and that man had to come to his rescue and help him out of a difficulty. Denominationalism turns men away from the unadulterated Word of God to an acceptance of the doctrines and commandments of men. And that is the very thing that Jesus condemned. He said, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9). Jesus admonishes men to refrain from following such teachers. "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt. 15:13-14). Denominationalism is not a divine planting. God did not plant it. Its leaders are blind guides. Jesus said: "Let them alone." The statement simply means that we should not follow them, for if we do, we shall fall into the ditch with them. Whenever a man is satisfied with God's revealed way, willing to take just the things found in the gospel of Christ, he will not build up denominationalism. And if he labors to build up denominationalism he announces his belief that God's way is not sufficient.

***It Demands Acceptance of Other Gospels.*** From what has already been said it is evident that denominationalism is not found in the gospel of Christ. Nothing can be called the gospel of Christ that is not authorized in the New Testament. But denominationalism is a perverted gospel. In Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia he said, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:6-7). This is the very thing that denominational preachers do. They pervert the gospel of Christ; they twist it into meaning what it does not mean. But what about men who pervert the gospel of Christ? Paul answers, "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. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8-9). In the strongest language possible this shows God's displeasure toward denominationalism. All the conflicting things proclaimed by denominational preachers cannot belong to the gospel of Christ. They preach perverted gospels other gospels than that proclaimed by the apostles. Hence, the curse of heaven rests upon them.

***It Would Make Christ a Polygamist.*** Christ and the church sustain the relationship of husband and wife. We read from the pen of Paul, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body" (Eph. 5:23). We have many statements showing there is only one body, or church (Eph. 4:4; 1 Cor. 12:20). Hence, Christ is the husband of one wife. But if all denominations are bodies of Christ, he is the husband of hundreds of wives. This would make him a polygamist. And that is exactly what the result will be if denominationalism is divinely authorized.

A system that is guilty of sin at so many points should be thrown aside. Let men come back to the Bible, to the Bible alone, and denominationalism will disappear from the earth, and the world will profit by the loss.