

## ARGUMENTS FROM DENOMINATIONALISTS

### Int.

1. Aim: To show the arguments made by denominationalists to justify the various denominations are false.
2. 1 Cor. 1:10 "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and [that] there be no divisions among you; but [that] ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."
  - a. Paul pleaded with them not to have divisions
  - b. His plea was for them to be united
3. Today in the religious world we have hundreds of different religious denominational groups teaching and practicing different doctrines.
4. The theory of denominationalism is that one may be a Christian and a member of the universal and "invisible" church, but by choice may be also a member of a particular segment of "Christianity." The word "Christendom" is used frequently in describing the whole religious world of those who claim to believe in Jesus Christ. Each group is called a denomination.
  - a. That segment will have certain features which distinguishes it from other "Christian" segments.
  - b. These distinguishing features are what denominates that segment, making it a denomination.
5. A denomination is not the church of the Bible. The true church is "one body" Eph. 4:4, not a division of the body.

6. By and large, most in the denominational world are really un-concerned with the divided state of so-called Christendom.
  - a. They have accepted the status-quo of their denominational affiliations as being acceptable to God.
  - b. Hence, they have never even considered the necessity to question their individual faith or the professed faith of those in theirs or others churches.
7. People who are in denominationalism defend it and make many argument to justify them

## Discussion

### I. SHEEP OF ANOTHER FOLD

- A. JOHN 10:16 “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, [and] one shepherd.”
  1. Some try to justify denominations by claiming that Jesus was talking about them when he uses the term “Sheep of another fold” !
  2. The claim is that the other fold is all the other denominations.
- B. Answer:
  1. He is speaking to the Jews - they are often called a flock
    - a. Ez. 34:17 “And [as for] you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats.”
    - b. Zech. 9:16 “And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for they [shall be as] the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land.”

2. The other sheep refers to the Gentiles
  - a. Christ did not die just for the Jews
  - b. Heb. 2:9 "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."
  - c. Rom. 1:16
  - d. All are one in Christ - Eph. 2:13-17 Both Jew and Gentile

## **II. VINE AND THE BRANCHES**

- A. JOHN 15:5 "I am the vine, ye [are] the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."
  1. Some try to justify denominations by the things that are used here.
  2. They say The vine represents the church universal
  3. Branches then represent the different denominations
- B. Answer:
  1. Jesus is the vine
    - a. He is using an illustration to teach his apostles
    - b. He says He is the vine
  2. Christians are the Branches
    - a. Ye are the branches
    - b. Apostles, disciples, - followers
    - c. A man - not a denomination

3. Apart from me ye can do nothing
  - a. A branch separated from the vine dies
  - b. A Christian must abide in Christ to bear fruit
  - c. Acts 4:12 "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."
4. A vine produces the same fruit
  - a. Foolish to think one vine produces over 300 different kinds of fruit.
  - b. Contrary to nature
  - c. Some would have us believe the branches represent the different denominations, who all teach and practice different doctrines yet claiming Christ as the Vine! This is absurd !

### **III. ALL RECOGNIZE CHRIST AS THE HEAD**

- A. The argument made: It is true that denominationalism represents a multiplicity of religious bodies; but since they all recognize just one head, Jesus Christ, they exist with divine approval.
- B. Answer:
  1. Acts 4:12 (NKJV) "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."
    - a. The name under heaven by which we must be saved is Jesus Christ.
    - b. No other name worn by denominations can save.
  2. Ephesians 4:4 (NKJV) "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;"

- a. There is only one body recognized by God. All others are false.
  - b. The only thing left to be determined is which body to participate in.
3. Colossians 1:18 (NKJV) "And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence."
- a. Jesus Christ is the head of His one body, the church.
  - b. The church of the New Testament. And being the Head, He makes the rules.
4. Ephesians 5:23 (NKJV) "For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body."
- a. The affirmation that Jesus Christ is the head of more than one religious body has the same evil connotation to it as the accusation that a certain man possesses more than one wife.
  - b. Denominationalism would make of the spotless Lamb of God an adulterer, having not just one spiritual wife but literally hundreds of them.
- C. Christ is the head of his church, not the man made churches of denominationalism.

#### **IV. JUST DIFFERENT BRANDS**

- A. III. The argument is: On the ranches of the west, cattle are given different brands, but they are still the same thing--- just cattle. In like manner, the members of the various denominations have different designations, but they are still the same thing--just Christians.

## B. The Answer:

1. The fact that cattle are branded differently indicates that they have different owners. Each owner brands the cattle he possesses with his own particular and peculiar brand. And so, the fact that members of the denominations are branded differently indicates that they do not belong to the same owner.
2. The Lord has purchased us, and has the right to place His particular brand on us.
3. What is the brand that Christ places on us?
  - a. Something that denotes the rightful ownership of the individual.
  - b. As a brand will declare to everyone who the owner is, so our names will declare who our owner is.
  - c. Acts 11:26 (NKJV) "And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch."
4. We can be certain that no responsible rancher would place different brands on his cattle, so Jesus does not brand His true followers with different religious names.
  - a. Those who wear such brands of different names are claiming ownership by someone other than Christ.
  - b. Someone else is their leader.

## **V. TRAVELING BY DIFFERENT ROADS**

A. Argument is made: The sincere, upright members of all the denominations are going to the same heaven, but they are just traveling by different roads.

B. Answer:

1. It may be true that many roads may lead to certain towns and places, but in the Bible we find that there is only one way to get to heaven. How do we find that way?
2. John 14:6 (NKJV) "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."
  - a. Jesus said He was the way to heaven.
  - b. It is through His sacrifice, His grace, and His obedience.
  - c. The way is through our obedience to His example and His teachings.
  - d. Only by doing His will His way, can we hope to get to heaven.
3. Matthew 7:14 (NKJV) "Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."
  - a. Jesus said this way was difficult and narrow, but not impossible.
  - b. There is only one way to get there.
  - c. The Bible is the roadmap.
  - d. The Word is the light that shows the way.
  - e. The Scriptures teach us how to stay on the correct path. The Law explains us how to conduct ourselves on this path.

## **VI. SINCERITY IS ALL THAT MATTERS**

- A. The Argument is made: It does not matter what one believes and practices in religion, just as long as he is sincere. The loyal members of the denominations sincerely believe that they are doing good, and that is all that really counts.
- B. Answer:
1. Were sincerity alone sufficient to justify men religiously, why does the Bible give us the example of Saul of Tarsus.
    - a. Acts 26:9 (NKJV) "Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth."
    - b. Acts 23:1 (NKJV) "Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."
    - c. Paul's sincerity did not make him right.
  2. Anyone can have sincerity, but still be wrong.
    - a. Someone can sincerely do something and still be hurt.
    - b. Example. I sincerely believe that the electricity is turned off.
    - c. One can be sincerely wrong, and they are still wrong.
    - d. Sincerely accepting a false doctrine cannot lead one to a right relationship with God.

## **VII. CAN'T ALL SEE THE BIBLE ALIKE**

- A. Argument: Denominations exist, with their differences in doctrine and practice, because it is impossible for all people to see the Bible alike.
- B. Answer:
1. If it is impossible for people to see the Bible alike, as so many thoughtlessly assert, then why was the Bible given as a revelation to convey the thoughts of God to the minds of men?
    - a. Paul said that we are to understand what the will of God is.
    - b. Eph. 5:17 "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."
    - c. God is not so cruel that He would make us do something that was impossible.
  2. Disagreement is always based upon the failure to understand what is revealed.
  3. In answer to a question as to why there are many divisions, one person said this. "Because they belong to different sects and have different systems, and they rather make the Bible bow to their own systems, than make their systems bow to the Bible. In other words, each person views the Bible from their own perspective or doctrine.
  4. Illustration:
    - a. Looking through colored glasses you think everything is that color
      - (1) Yellow = John Calvin
      - (2) Blue = John Wesley
      - (3) Green = Joseph Smith
    - b. Truth is not colored = no prejudice
  5. We can understand the Bible. When we understand it correctly we will understand it alike. The truth cannot be understood in more than one way.

**VIII. AGREE IN ESSENTIAL MATTERS**

- A. Argument: It is true that the denominations disagree regarding certain doctrines and practices, but these are unessential matters. Concerning the essentials, such as belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, acceptance of the moral precepts of the Bible, etc., the denominations are united.
- B. Answer:
1. This is based upon a false concept of the unity of the denominations. There is in fact, nothing God has revealed through Jesus Christ and the New Testament that is not essential.
    - a. Why would God burden us down with non-essential matters?
    - b. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV) "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, {17} that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."
    - c. "All Scripture" is able to make a man of God complete and ready to do God's will.
  2. Matthew 28:20 (NKJV) "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.
    - a. When Jesus gave "The Great Commission", He said to teach the believers all things He had commanded.
    - b. He did not say teach some or most, but all.
    - c. He did not say that some things are essential and other are not!!

3. This argument being discussed here is definite admission by those in the denominations that theirs is a failure to follow God's word, by going beyond His law.
  - a. What they are saying is that they know their teaching is different from the Word of God, but by claiming that it is non-essential or un-important justifies their right to practice or teach it.
  - b. If any part of God's Word is un-important or non-essential, then we can easily dismiss that any of it is important or essential.
  - c. Are you willing to concede that the Bible is not the Word of God? That it has no authority?

## **IX. DENOMINATIONALISM IS AGAINST THE SCRIPTURES**

- A. Many people like the idea of denominationalism
  1. They think the idea of having several hundred groups is great
  2. This enables every person to have a religion that is pleasing to him.
  
- B. DENOMINATIONALISM IS ANTI-SCRIPTURAL...
  1. Not only is it without scriptural support, it is contrary to what the Bible teaches
  2. It is contrary to the prayer of Jesus for unity among His believers - Jn 17:20-23
  3. It is condemned by Paul in his epistle to the church at Corinth
    - a. There are to be no divisions among believers - 1 Co 1:10-13
    - b. Sectarianism is a sign of carnality - 1 Co 3:3-4

4. It opposes the efforts of Christ on the cross! - Ep 2:14-16
  - a. Jesus died to break down the wall of division
  - b. Jesus died to reconcile man to God in ONE body
  - c. Just as sinning works against the efforts of Christ on the cross (for He also died to put away sin), so it is with denominational division!

### Conclusion

1. Arguments from Denominationalists have been considered and answered.
2. Every denomination exists because of division.
  - a. Because some could not agree as to the meaning of certain scriptures or beliefs.
  - b. Or because some became tired of the old ways and needed something new.
  - c. Or because some influential person swayed them.
  - d. Or out of a conviction that something was amiss, they started another denomination.
3. DENOMINATIONALISM IS HARMFUL TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST...
  - a. Jesus knew that unity among His disciples would be "the final apologetic"
  - b. "that the world may believe" - Jn 17:21
  - c. In view of Jesus' words, we should not be surprised when unbelievers are slow to accept the gospel coming from a divided church
  - d. Many people point to the divided condition of those professing to follow Christ...
    - i. Atheists and agnostics often use religious division as an excuse not to believe in God
    - ii. Adherents to non-Christian religions (such as Islam, Judaism, etc.) will often use denominationalism as a reason not to believe in Christ
4. There is no justification for denominationalism to exist.

5. Christ built his church - it is his body
    - a. Eph. 4:4 there is One Body
    - b. The body is the church - Eph. 1:22-23
    - c. He purchased the church - his body - with his blood - Acts 20:28
    - d. This was the church he promised to build - Matt. 16:18
  6. You can become a member of his church and never become a member of a denomination!
  7. To be saved we must be in Christ
    - a. Gal. 3:27 "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."
    - b. Are you ready to be baptized?
  8. You can be just a Christian !!!
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## **Bibliography**

Files on Denominationalism

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