

The BEACON

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"CHURCH OF CHRIST" by Eugene Britnell

"Rev." Reginald Kelly - (Note: The following article appeared in a Catholic publication, "Our Sunday Visitor" on December 1, 1957.)

The "Churches of Christ" regard themselves as the true church founded by Christ and do not consider themselves a denomination. They may be classed among the Protestant fundamentalists. Their basic principle is that they "speak where the Scriptures speak and are silent where the Scriptures are silent," but, like all such groups, they decide for themselves what the Scriptures command and what they forbid.

They hold to the usual Protestant doctrines that the Bible is the sole rule of Faith and that it may be interpreted by the private individual. Baptism is received only by adults by immersion. The Lord's Supper is observed every Sunday, and each church is strictly congregational in character. Any kind of instrumental music is forbidden in their worship services as, it is held, this is a matter about which the Bible does not "speak." Some of their teachings are a little more distinctive from regular Protestantism. They hold that only those are saved who belong to their "Church of Christ." Salvation does not come through Faith alone, but good works are also necessary. Their violent attacks on the Catholic Church must be understood in the light of the fact that they consider the Church to be the Scarlet Woman, the Great Apostasy. Church of Christ people are also great believers in religious debate and argument. Great emphasis is placed upon the fact that their church has the name "Church of Christ," although nowhere in Scripture is the Church Christ founded given one particular name, which excludes

all others.

This church broke away from the Disciples of Christ, founded by Alexander Campbell, a former Baptist minister, in Virginia in 1813. They first reported as a separate body in the 1906 census of religious bodies. On June 17, 1907, Elder D. Lipscomb of the Gospel Advocate of Nashville, Tenn., in answer to a query from S.D. N. North of the Census Bureau in Washington replied, "these disciples have separated from the 'Christian Church' that grew out of the effort to restore pure primitive Christianity." The two main causes of the division were the introduction of the use of organs in churches and the question of missionary societies. When America began to grow out of frontier conditions, many churches began to be able to afford to purchase organs. The conservatives objects to this, because, they said, the use of organs in church worship is unscriptural. Many of the conservatives, in opposition to the liberal Disciples, also objected to formally organized missionary societies, because, they said, such institutions are not taught in the Bible. This church is a reaction against much of the Protestant liberalism that is so prevalent today, the believe-what-you-want-to, one-religion-is-as-another school of Protestant theology that has watered down Protestantism so much that it is almost impossible to discover what Protestant churches actually believe and teach. In opposition to this wishy-washy attitude, the Church of Christ comes along and says, "No, here is what you must believe and do to be saved, because we are the true church founded by Christ." It is a mark of the one true Church that the Church is truly Catholic, that all types of people with conservative and liberal

emotional bents can live in harmony under one roof, without being racked by liberal-conservative splits, as Protestant denominations have so often been in the past. The Church of Christ has been very loud in its opposition to Catholicism. Shortly after World War II, "missionaries" of this church were sent to Italy and made the newspaper in this country over their battles with the Italian police over the legal question of their right to erect church signs. Catholics were immediately accused of persecution, although other Protestant denominations have lived at peace in Italy for generations. They also expressed their opposition to the Catholic Church through radio broadcasts, some of them over a national network. The question might reasonably be asked, apart from their doctrinal attitude, why have they displayed such bitterness towards the Catholic Church where there is no direct, historical connection with us. The answer, of course, is that the Catholic Church is, as she is to other such sects, a living, historical refutation of all their claims. In recent years the Church of Christ has begun to divide again, this time between those who hold that Sunday schools are unscriptural and those who do not. Great emphasis is placed on each church's congregational character to the point that no church conventions are held, although "Lectureships" take their place. There is no formal cooperation with other Protestant bodies or Protestant interdenominational bodies. Their popularity with other Protestant bodies is not high, because, starting with the principle of private interpretation of the Bible as the sole rule of Faith, as other Protestants do, they announce that their interpretation of the Bible is the only correct one and it is necessary for all to join with them. Such an example, as they have shown, in picking over small points and ignoring some of the cardinal points of the Christian Faith, shows what happens when one makes religion something buried in a book and ignores the authority and tradition of the Catholic Church. Catholics could well copy the members of this church in their zeal, especially in studying and learning their religion and in winning converts. Catholics should pray for them

that they will find the true "Church of Christ." (Please keep this copy handy and available, for in the next issue we plan to review this material. To conserve space, we will refer to the paragraphs as you count them from the beginning, with only brief quotes from the above article.—E. B.)

The Mystery of Iniquity - by Eugene Britnell

A REVIEW OF "CHURCH OF CHRIST"

In the last issue of this paper, we presented an article from "Our Sunday Visitor" of 1957, written by a Catholic priest. The purpose of the article was to inform Catholic people concerning the origin of the "Church of Christ." It is our purpose in this review to answer some of the things stated and taught in the Catholic article.

It is obvious to the informed reader that Mr. Kelly has some knowledge of the history and salient characteristics of churches of Christ. Much of what he said is true, however, there are many false charges, misrepresentations, false implications and unnecessary inferences in his material. Our readers can see by the Catholic article and other such evidence we could present that our controversy with the Catholic Church is not one sided. They oppose us just as we oppose them. We are willing, ready and anxious to engage in spiritual warfare with them—openly and honestly—and our only weapon will be the "sword of the Spirit" which is the word of God (**Eph. 6:17**). We requested that you keep your last copy of this paper available for reference as you study with us. We shall refer to each paragraph by number, from first to last, with a minimum of quotation in order to conserve space. So take your last issue and read each paragraph in the article as you study what we shall say in this review. **Paragraph 1:** The "Churches of Christ" are proud to claim Christ as their builder, and he did not build a denomination. They do endeavor to speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent. This principle of interpretation is taught in such passages as Matthew 16:19 and I Peter 4:11. He

says that we, "like all such groups," decide for ourselves what the Scriptures command and forbid. Well, in the first place, there is no other "such group" and it is true that God intended for all people—not just the "clergy"—to read and understand His word. Paul thought that the saints in Ephesus could read and understand what he wrote unto them (**Eph. 3:1-7**). The Catholic Church teaches that it alone, through the "infallible" popes, is the divinely-authorized interpreter of the Scriptures. They often try to support this claim by calling attention to the division among the protestants and cults who try to interpret the Bible for themselves. But they fail to mention the many divisions and doctrinal controversies within the Catholic Church, past and present. Some among them even deny the infallibility of the pope; bishops challenge many papal decrees; they are not united on such subjects as celibacy, birth control, women priests, etc. A brief news report in the **May 20, 1983** issue of Christianity Today said: "Most editors of both national and diocesan Catholic publications are at odds with official church teaching on issues such as priestly celibacy, the ordination of women, and artificial birth control. The poll was conducted by the Catholic Communications Network in conjunction with the **National Catholic Register**.. ." While we're on this subject, may we ask: How many (or how few) verses of scripture have ever been officially interpreted by the popes? You would be surprised! **Paragraph 2:** Yes, we believe that the Bible is the sole rule of faith. Faith comes only by hearing God's word (**Rom. 10:17**). In contrast, the Catholic Church relies more upon tradition than truth for its doctrine. By this they become guilty of the same mistakes of some during the time of Christ on earth, and he said unto them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition" (**Matt. 15:9**). The reason we practice baptism of adults by immersion is that such is all that is taught by the commands and examples in the Scriptures. Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (**Mark 16:16**). Philip told the Ethiopian, "If you believe with all your heart" you

may be baptized (**Acts 8:37**). What if he did not or could not believe? The Bible says that baptism is a burial and resurrection (**Rom. 6:3; Col. 2:12**). We observe the Lord's Supper weekly because the early Christians, under apostolic oversight, did (**Acts 20:7**). Each church is "congregational in character" because the

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8. 368) 2 Cor. 9:13 - Does This Authorize?
9. 353) Do I love truth? – 2 Thess 2:6-11
10. 430) The Lies of the Devil

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NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

When Christ said that “ **I will build** my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” **Matthew 16:18**, the question that must be asked is, is it wrong to worship and fellowship with a religious group whose founder and builder is not the Son of God? Or does it really matter which church I belong to?



Lord's church, unlike the Catholic Church, is not organized in a universal sense. The only organizational and functional arrangement of the Lord's church on earth is the congregation (**Phil. 1:1**). There is not an official or body of officials over the universal church authorized or even mentioned in the Bible.

Paragraph 3: In this short paragraph he says, "Any kind of instrumental music is forbidden in their worship services as, it is held, this is a matter about which the Bible does not 'speak'." It is true that the New Testament under which we live does not speak of instrumental music in worship. Since the Lord assured his apostles that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth (**John 16:13**) and they said nothing about instrumental music, we must conclude that such is not a part of God's truth by which we live and worship. The New Testament does "speak" about music, but it authorizes only singing or vocal music (**Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16**). As any good religious history or encyclopedia will tell us, instrumental music was introduced into worship by—you guessed it, the Catholic Church. **The American Encyclopedia**, Vol. 7, p. 112, says: "The organ is said to have been first introduced into church music by Pope Vitalian I in 666." **To be Continued in the July Beacon 2008 - From Searching the Scriptures June, July and August 1983 Vol. 24 No. 6,7,8**

To answer this in the words men is to say “all roads lead to heaven”, but to answer in the words of Scripture there is only one way - “Jesus saith unto him, **I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**” **John 14:6**. Seek the truth and it will set you free - **John 8:32**. Look to the Bible for the answers not to men and the doctrines of

churches not built by Jesus Christ. - see **Matthew 15:8-9**.

Bible Study 9:30am

Worship 11:00am