

# *Redwater Restorer*

*"The voice of one crying in the wilderness..." (Matthew 3:3)*

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## *The Creeds And Confusion Of Christendom*

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### *Introduction*

Christendom is the name used to refer to the many churches that propose to follow Christ, but are divided into about three hundred denominational groups. Each one teaches doctrines which separate it from all the others. Each has its own creed. This is very confusing to many people and constitutes a barrier which has kept many from Christ.

God is not the author of confusion, but of peace (1 Corinthians 14:33). The Bible does not teach the contradictory doctrines and creeds of Christendom.

We read in the Bible about the Lord's church. It is not a denomination. It is not a conglomeration of factions. It is the body of Christ. Denominations were started over a long period of years because of failure to follow the Bible. The Bible contains the truth which makes people free and binds them in Christ, or in His one body which is His church.

The confusion of Christendom did not emerge from the Bible. The Bible stresses unity. Jesus earnestly prayed that all who follow him be one as He and the Father are one (John 17). The apostle Paul, by the direction of the Holy Spirit, begged divided Christians to do away with divisions (1 Corinthians 1:10; 3:1-3). He also begged united Christians to put forth their best efforts to keep their unity in the bond of peace in the one body, which is the church for which Jesus gave Himself (Ephesians 4:1-6; 5:25).

### *Careless Interpretation Or Misinterpretation*

The Bible is in harmony with itself. Careless

interpretation of the Bible makes it appear to be a book that teaches contradictory doctrines.

An example of misinterpretation, or careless interpretation, is when one understands a passage in the Bible to teach that which causes him to have to deny another passage or passages in the Bible. Careless interpretation can make it seem that one passage of Scripture contradicts another passage or passages in the Bible. Careless and reckless interpretation even causes people to conclude that one can prove just anything he wants to prove by the Bible.

### *Violation of a Command*

The Holy Spirit has directed that the Word of God is to be handled aright, or rightly divided (2 Timothy 2:15). The Greek word of that text which is translated "rightly dividing," or "handling aright," is the word *orthotomounta*. This word literally means *cutting straight*. Paul may have been alluding to his work of making tents wherein he cut materials. He had to cut such according to a pattern, or cut them straight so the pieces would all fit together properly to form a tent.

Careless and reckless interpretation of God's Word is a violation of a command of God to be very careful in interpreting the Bible, or the command to **cut it straight**, and results in religious confusion and chaos. Man's easy way out of such pandemonium is to say God's Book, the Bible, is to be blamed, and that just anything can be proven by it. This is blasphemy, and it deceives and misleads precious people and destroys souls. Peter said the unlearned wrestled some Scriptures to their own destruction (2 Peter 3:16-18). People are to blame for the confu-

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sion of Christendom, not God and his Book the Bible!

### *Examples*

“I am the vine, ye are the branches . . .” (John 15:5). Jesus said this to his disciples. He said many things to describe his church before he actually established it. The analogy of the vine and the branches emphasizes unity, because each branch on a vine is the same kind of branch; the branches on a vine all bear the same kind of fruit. Despite these facts, some misuse the beautiful analogy of the vine and the branches that our Master used and try to make it mean that Jesus taught division. They say that each branch represents a denomination.

Such an interpretation, or misinterpretation, is not “cutting it straight,” and instead makes what Jesus said that is recorded in John 15 contradict what he said in prayer as recorded in John 17. But Jesus did not contradict himself. He did not teach his disciples to be divided on one occasion and then pray for unity on another occasion!

The word branch does not refer to a denomination in John 15. It refers to an individual Christian. Each person in Christ is a branch. John 15:6 clarifies this because in that verse Jesus said, “*If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch . . .*” Each one in Christ is a branch. “*A man*” is a branch! A branch is not a denomination, it is one person! Paul wrote that there are many members, yet, **but** one body, and he said that one body is the church (1 Corinthians 12:20, 27). One of the greatest needs is the need for all to understand the oneness and unity taught in God’s Word.

Another example of not cutting it straight, or not handling the word of God aright, is the way many misuse passages in the Bible which say salvation is by faith. Salvation is by faith; the Bible plainly and emphatically teaches this. But the Bible does not teach that salvation is by faith without obedience. The faith identi-

fied in God’s Word as the faith that saves is the faith that one has that is accompanied by one’s obedience to God’s commands.

One misinterprets Holy Scripture when he thinks the Bible teaches that one can be saved and become a Christian by faith in God and in Christ without being baptized into Christ for the remission of sins, because the scriptures teach that baptism is the act by which one can get into Christ so he can be saved by the precious blood of Christ (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38, 22:16; Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:27; 1 Corinthians 12:13,14).

### *Important Insight*

What I have stated above is a tremendously important insight to the Holy Bible. The Bible does not contradict itself. The Bible does not teach the many conflicting doctrines and creeds of so-called Christendom. If we treat the Bible fairly, and interpret it carefully, it will bind us all together in Christ.

We cannot conceive of the power and thrust of all who are now involved in what is called Christendom if all these were united as the Bible teaches all followers of Christ to be united. Those who truly follow Christ are united. Where there is division, some (or all) are not really following Christ.

In the future issues of this publication I will set forth from God’s word the identifying characteristics of the Lord’s true church. Characteristics which are found when we cut straight the pattern given by God. I invite you to continue with me in this study.

*Mark Miller*

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