

Jesus Is The Only Head of The Church

by Howard Winters

In Colossians, chapter 1, Paul depicts Christ as the redeemer (14), the creator (15-17), and the head of the church (18). He concludes, "That in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell" (18, 19).

Other Scriptures also make clear the fact that Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 1:22,23; 4:15; 5:23; Colossians 2:10). This means that he is the source of her life (all things are from him) and that he rules over her with divine authority. For this reason, every member of the body must be in subjection to him (Col. 2:19). To make application of this grand fact, let us notice:

A DIVINE HEAD

The church has a divine head, Jesus Christ her Lord. This simply means that Christ rules over her. The church is not a monstrosity it is not a many-headed body. It is one body with one head. Christ does not share his rule or authority with man. This being true, it follows then with all the force that reason, logic, and Scripture can have, that the church has no human head. Any man who claims to be the head of the church, either in heaven or on earth, makes a false claim and seizes for himself a prerogative that belongs to Christ alone. Christ is not only the divine head of the church, he is her only head.

A DIVINE BODY

Christ is the head of the church, which is his body (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23). It would be an incongruity for a human body to have a divine head, or vice versa. The conclusion is therefore inevitable that the church is a divine institution. The church is divine because she was conceived in the mind of God (Eph. 3:10, 11), foretold by the prophets (Isaiah 2:2-4), built by Jesus (Matthew 16:16-18), purchased with his blood (Acts 20:28), and constructed under the immediate direction of the Holy Spirit working through the apostles of Christ (Acts 2). This divine institution is made up of all the saved (Acts 2:47); has for her mission the salvation of lost souls (Mark 16:15-16); and God's divine law, as revealed in the New Testament, is her only rule of conduct (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). Every member of the Lord's church is a member of a divine institution.

This should be contrasted with modern denominations, which are human in origin, name, doctrine, organization, and practice, have human heads, and are rule by human laws.

DIVINE AUTHORITY

Because she has but one head, the church of Christ is subject to only one source of authority. Jesus said, "All power (authority, ASV) is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). His authority is exercised through his word. Thus when one obeys the word of God he is submitting to divine authority, the only

voice of authority known by the New Testament Church.

By authority we mean the power or right to command. In America we are accustomed to a balance of authority between the branches of government. Legislative authority resides in Congress, executive in the President, and judicial in the courts. But in the church there is only one source of authority, Jesus Christ, the Lord.

A DIVINE PRACTICE

Since the church follows only the instructions given by her divine head (through his divine word), all her practices are divine. The way of God is far above the ways of man (Isa. 55:8, 9) and it is not in man to direct his own steps (Jeremiah 10:23). This means that every action must be directed by the Scriptures every act must be an authorized act (Col. 3:17). Paul stated this principle clearly when he said, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). This simply means that if a thing cannot be proven (by the Scriptures), it cannot be practiced. If one holds fast only proven things, then it necessarily follows that he must reject everything not proven. All directions must come from the head.

No council, synod, convention, or creed of men can establish the standard for the Lord's church. To recognize Jesus as head is to follow his directions; and to follow his directions results in divine practice.

DIVINE PERPETUITY

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8). The church therefore never changes heads. She functions under the same head, the same authority, century after century. When Pope John XXIII died, I wrote the following four lines for our weekly church bulletin:

Pope John Twenty-three is dead
And the Roman church is without a head;
But let me say, with all that in me lies;
The head of the Lord's church never dies.

Poetry that decidedly is not; truth it most certainly is.

A DIVINE RELATIONSHIP

Because Christ is the head of the body, which is the church, Christ and the church are inseparably joined together. Christ works through his body and the body does the work of Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Eph. 4:11-15; 1 Peter 4:8-11). This makes it impossible to reject the body without also rejecting the head, "From which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God" (Col. 2:19). Christ cannot be received apart from his body.

CONCLUSION

Christ is the head of the church, her ruler, her authority, her director. If one desires to have Christ as his head he must be in the church, the church which is his body. And he must follow the directions given by the head. If one loves the Lord, if he respects him as the head of the church, why would he want to be in anything else? How could he be in anything else Scripturally? To be in another body would be to have another head.