An Insurmountable Barrier

A little over a year ago I read an interesting article on the internet concerning a large Church of Christ in San Antonio, Texas. The congregation had decided to change its name by dropping the "of Christ" portion. A popular writer with millions of copies sold world wide, serves as the "pulpit preacher" at this congregation. He explained the reason for the name change in the congregation’s new vision statement. He stated, "Some people find the name ‘Church of Christ’ to be an insurmountable barrier." Therefore, with the logic and rationale that pervades the world in our era they just dropped the "of Christ." Since the group has a new vision statement, multi-media church, musical instruments in the evening services, a "20-30 something" worship service in their fellowship hall, three main Sunday morning services, and has declared that baptism is not necessary for salvation, it probably should have changed its name. It appears that it ceased to be the Church of Christ established on Pentecost a long time ago.

Let’s think about the name change for a moment. The congregation wanted to remove any barriers to people becoming members of their congregation so they got rid "of Christ." Many will no doubt object that my play with semantics is going a bit too far. But, consider this. "Name" by definition is "that by which a person or thing is distinctively called or designated." Therefore, the name "Church of Christ" distinctively calls the church by His name and designates the church as His church. What does any other name designate? Not Christ if His name is not used. After all, Jesus did say "…I will build my church." Further, consider these scriptures. "…Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12) What is this name? It is Jesus Christ of Nazareth (verse 12). Christ is the savior of the body (Ephesians 5:23), and the body is the church (Col 1:18). One name designates Christ’s church or body in whose name we must be saved i.e. the Church of Christ.

Since the days of the first century church, people have denied and rejected the name of Christ. They have found it an "insurmountable barrier." To "deny" is "to abrogate, forsake, or renounce a thing." To drop the name of Christ is to forsake that...
blessed name. To call the name of Christ’s church, the Church of Christ, “an insurmountable barrier” is to renounce the name of the body that Christ died to save.

So, some people are offended by the name of the Church of Christ. Do we then change it? No, and again, no! We are instructed to be “reconciled to God” not to change things to please the world. The apostle Peter says, “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye”; (1 Peter 4:14). Peter did not tell us to change our name if somebody does not like it. Christ praised the congregation at Pergamos by saying “And thou holdest fast my name and hast not denied my faith”; (Revelation 2:13). They did not drop the name of Christ because some people found it to be “insurmountable.”

Considering the above action, James 2:7 seems applicable, though admittedly out of context. “Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by which ye are called?” –fg