

THE REFLECTOR

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January 1976

'By Nature the Children of Wrath'

by Barney Keith

In Ephesians 2:3 Paul asserts that these brethren, prior to their salvation by grace, had been "*by nature the children of wrath.*" From this statement is posed the fundamental question: Did Paul teach that men are sinners by *natural generation*, BORN sinners? Did he mean that their *inherited constitution* was corrupt?

As has been emphasized in this series the TRUE sense of a passage of scripture can be learned only by by considering the setting in which it appears. All language must be treated in this manner. Numerous false religious doctrines have been originated by "lifting" a scripture from its context and giving it an arbitrary meaning, thus perverting or wresting the word of God (See 2 Pet. 3:16.)

Calvinism - Not Scripture

Much of the Protestant world has taken it for granted (because of tradition) that "by nature" means *by birth*, by natural inheritance. The doctrine of total hereditary depravity is a cardinal point of the Calvinistic theology which underlies much of the religious teaching of our day. This is nowhere taught in God's word. Men need to take a closer look at what Paul ACTUALLY says in Ephesians 2:3 as it is explained in the setting. Unless one is reading through glasses of Calvinism, he will not find Paul discussing something the Ephesians had inherited from Adam, but rather a condition attained before their conversion by their OWN ACTIONS.

Personal Conduct - Not Inheritance

Read the first three verses of Ephesians carefully. As you read note the expressions which show that their state had been incurred by their own actions. (1) "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins (2) in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. (3) Among them we too all formerly lived in the lust of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest." (NASV)

Several things should be noted:

(1) *The Ephesians had been in the past "dead in in YOUR trespasses and sins" - NOT because of Adam's sins, but "YOUR" sins. (See Isa. 59:1,2.)*

(2) *The reason they were dead in their own sins was because of what THEY had done, their own conduct. Note:*

"WALKED" after the ways of the world and Satan (verse 2)

YOU - "LIVED" in lust (verse 3)

("Ye") "INDULGED" the desires of the flesh (verse 3)

(3) *Therefore, the very "nature" of their CONDUCT was sinful. It was made so by their walking, living, and indulging. The passage does not refer to their nature by birth but to the nature (character) of their deeds. Living in sinful ways had become their customary, habitual practice. The point is that they had become this way; nothing indicates they had been born that way. It is as though the apostle were saying, "You were, by the very nature of your actions, children of wrath."*

"Phusis" - "Nature"

While it is true that the Greek word "*phusis*" (nature) can and does at times denote an inherited nature, it does not always do so. The context must be considered in determining the sense. The Greek lexicographer J. H. Thayer, defines the word also to mean:

"c. *A mode of feeling and acting which by long habit has become nature*" (Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 660).

This is the definition which best fits what Paul describes, for Eph. 2:1-3 clearly shows that their "mode of feeling and acting" had "by long habit" become "nature" to them. Hence, they were subject to God's wrath.

Understanding What Sin Is

When one examines BIBLE explanations of sin, he sees easily that sin is not something one inherits by birth, but rather something which one *practices*.

(1) "*Sin is the transgression of law*" (1 John 3:4). It is the practicing of that which is unlawful. One is not born transgressing any law. Infants are incapable either of *knowing* the law or of *acting* contrary to the law.

(2) "*All unrighteousness is sin*" (1 John 5:17). Sin (unrighteousness) is something a person does (1 John 3:7,8). Infants, having no awareness of what is "unrighteous" are incapable of sin.

(3) "*Whatsoever is not of faith is sin*" (Rom. 14:

23). Since an infant is incapable of exercising faith, he cannot be a sinner "by nature" (birth).

Let it be remembered, when one insists that every man is a sinner by fleshly birth, that our Lord Jesus Christ *partook of the fleshly nature of man* (Heb. 2: 14). He was of Adam's lineage (Lk. 3:38). Certainly Jesus was not "by nature" a child of wrath.

In conclusion let it be reiterated: A man is NOT corrupt and sinful due to inheritance of guilt from Adam, but through his OWN actions. God says (Ezek. 18:20), "The soul that sinneth it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." That was exactly the case with the Ephesians in 2:1-3. That is the case with all people who attain to an accountable status before God.

2047 High School Road, Hueytown, Alabama 35020

from GOSPEL GUARDIAN, Oct. 23, 1958

CHRISTIAN COLLEGES

by Harold Edwards

This letter and reply taken from the *Millennial Harbinger* seem as timely today as they were one hundred and twenty-five years ago. ("Christian College," M. H., IV, April, 1833, 189-191.)

Dear Sir,

You once complained to me that the fountains of literary education were as much sectarian as the parties under whose auspices they were got up and patronized. You lamented that the youth of our country could no where obtain an education without the danger of becoming infidels or sectarians. I felt the force, because I knew the truth of it, at least in a limited sense; and from that day till now I have been endeavoring to excite an interest in the community in behalf of a literary institution free from those tendencies. I have tried it in Ohio, and in Virginia, but without success. I have, however, made a successful effort in Indiana, and have actually succeeded in getting such an institution chartered. It is the most liberal in its provisions, and I hope to all the liberal-minded of the community, it will prove (what I sincerely wish it to be) a real and lasting benefit. A copy of the charter and the by-laws I herewith forward you, and hope they will meet your views. Will you please notice it in the *Harbinger*? . . .

In much Affection, yours in the Lord,

John Cook Bennett

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Volume XVI

Number 1

Brother Bennett,
Dear Sir,

Yours of March 1st now lies before me. The intelligence it communicates was to me wholly unexpected. I heard nothing of this project until it was consummated. I had thought that your failure in Ohio and Virginia had broken your spirits in this enterprize, and that you had given it up. My remarks to you, to which you allude, were not made with a design to enlist you in such an enterprize: for you were then enlisted in it. And as the Christian religion has not much to expect from the literary institutions of this world, except so far as society at large is benefited by them, I never wished to see any institution got up for the purpose of aiding or abetting a cause which needs no such alliance, and which never has been directly benefited by such institutions. The gospel converts men of all ranks, casts, talents, and education, to God; and then their literature and talents and property are consecrated to the Lord. While, then, I have sometimes expressed myself as you have represented, it was rather from a wish to see the fountains of education divested of the power of doing harm to Christianity, than with an expectation or desire to see any one instituted expressly for its benefit. — Whether such an institution could be erected, is, with me at least, very problematical; and were it in its infancy to be a benefit, we have no evidence from any thing past that it could long continue so. . . .

Editor

There has been entirely too much eagerness on the part of individuals on both sides of the present disputes in the church to gain the approval of the ancients — the restoration heroes. Such human approval is, of course, a completely fallible source of authority. Besides being fallible, the testimony of the great figures of the restoration movement often proves changeable. Many figures in restoration history have been cited on both sides of the present issues — in perfect accuracy. No personage in the history of the church in this country was given more to this disposition to change than Alexander Campbell. Any student of Campbell will admit that the alert, crusading, reforming young preacher of the 1830's had lost much of his determination, vigor, and sense of destiny by the 1850's. The contention of this article is not, then, that the views expressed in Campbell's reply are correct because he said them but that the views are correct because they are in accord with the teaching of the scriptures. It is interesting that Campbell faced the same problems in the 1830's that faithful brethren face today. The force of the great reformer's answers still commands attention.

First, Campbell points out to the well-intentioned brother that no institution is necessary for the spiritual regeneration of the world aside from the church. He disapproved of any human institution being erected "expressly for its (Christianity's) benefit." This is a truth brethren today need to digest well. While there are many institutions that are good, useful, practical, pure, and expedient, there is only one institution which is burdened with the responsibility of extending the sway of Christianity — the church. If any institution is going to further the conversion of the world today, it must be the church — not colleges, youth camps, or boy scout troops. Until Christians return to the church as the Christianizing power of the world, the church will have no power at all and the world will not be Christianized.

This is not to say that colleges, especially colleges operated by Christians, are not good and useful. Any

force which elevates the moral and ethical atmosphere of society is useful. But every institution which elevates the moral atmosphere of society is not "Christian," nor should it be designed to further Christianity. To make a person a good citizen, to make a person moral, is not to make a Christian. When you convince a man to obey the laws recorded in God's word, then you make him a Christian. The admirable job of making good people can be discharged by many institutions; the business of making Christians is the work of the church.

Colleges operated by Christians are not only good because they make better citizens (indeed, almost any college does this), they are also useful because they do no harm to Christianity — a statement which could hardly be made of most of the state colleges of today. In short, colleges operated by devoted and godly men can be of tremendous value in directing and protecting young people. They can provide a spiritual atmosphere for young people to work in, they can provide pure and clean amusements and society, they can guide young lives into channels of usefulness for the future, as individual Christians the teachers in such colleges can do their utmost to fulfill their personal obligation to spread the truths of the gospel, but a college cannot and must not try to sell itself to the church as an institution formed for the purpose of Christianizing young people — for doing the work of the church. I believe there are some colleges in the brotherhood today that are doing much good — in spite of desperate attempts to discredit them. I certainly wish harm to no school which operates within a scriptural framework; I only plead that the brethren place all human institutions in their proper perspective.

The second point made by Campbell which seems worthy of emphasis is the following: "... I never wished to see any institution got up for the purpose of aiding or abetting a cause which needs no alliance." The height of presumption in the controversies in the church of the Lord today is the idea that men can form institutions to ally with the church to help it carry out its God-given duties. Where in God's word does the church cry out for allies? Where does the divine institution whimper for help? The church needs no human promotion, scheme, or institution to do everything God has required of it. Alexander Campbell and those courageous men engaged in the nineteenth century attempt to reclaim the glory and grandeur of the Lord's church from the corruption of centuries of human abuse had faith and confidence in the mission and in the power of the church. No characteristic of the present digression from the truth is more apparent than the complete abandonment of this faith in the church. During the past few decades the church has been presented with more allies than the United Nations during World War II. The church has gorged on, and had crammed down its throat, so many "Christian" adjuncts that if it ever regurgitates them all out of its budget, many people will think there is nothing "Christian" left in the church. Many of the "Christian" colleges have of late, some clandestinely and others quite openly, decided to join this band of vampire allies and suck their quota of blood — the precious blood of Christ — from the body of the Lord — the church. When will the people awaken and see that the church requires no allies. The church made Christians of people before there were any colleges, youth camps, orphan homes, or human institutions of any description. Let the record speak clear, it is just as lawful for me to fellowship a man who decides to aid the wor-

ship by adding instrumental music, or to aid the spread of the gospel by providing a missionary society, as the man who decides to aid the church by providing some other institution. Consistency must be our guidepost. Let him who will be taught. The line of fellowship draws menacingly and necessarily more distinct.

The final statement made by the distinguished Campbell which I particularly want to call to your attention is a word of warning rather than a statement of truth. Even, says Campbell, if an institution can be erected which will be useful to Christians (as the present Christian-operated colleges), beware, for "we have no evidence from any thing past that it could long continue so." History, and especially the history of the church, could testify on no subject more conclusively than on the variable nature of human institutions. Human institutions are no more dependable than human nature.

It is certainly not bad to build and strive for useful and profitable colleges, schools, papers, businesses, and all sorts of human institutions, but we must never place our faith in them. If human history does not change to a course never before pursued, that which today is useful will tomorrow be damnable, that which is today good will tomorrow be the instrument of the devil. Let us do what we can in our lifetime and trust those who are faithful to the Lord in the next generation to supply its wants. We cannot control the future. It is not necessary to remind those who have been members of the church for many years that institutions which once played a large part in the directing of God's people in the strait way are now instruments of deception. Although it may sound like bad business (it will more likely be good Christian business), I firmly believe that good advice to every Christian is to use up your life, your time, your money, your energy, and your talent while they are yours to use. A school, or any other institution, which is doing good now should be supported now. Use all your capabilities — now.

Neither this article, nor that of Brother Campbell, is meant to malign or criticize schools. As I said before in this article, I believe there are some schools operated by Christians today which are sources of great good. My only plea is that brethren everywhere recognize the true purpose, and the proper relation to the church, of schools and of every other human institution.

EDITOR'S DESK

This, too, is liberalism

For a generation the church has been involved in controversy over church supported institutions, sponsoring churches, and the work of the church in general. Those who have favored support of institutions, sponsoring churches, church sponsored recreation and soc-

ial activities have been generally labeled *liberal* by those who have opposed such things. I believe that for the most part that such labeling was more than justified.

But while many were fighting the *liberals* in these matters, they themselves have become rather liberal in their approach to morals and worldliness. *Conservative* churches and *conservative* preachers have been known to be rather *liberal* in their views on modesty, drinking and marriage.

When a preacher (or anyone) openly states that there is nothing wrong with drinking alcoholic beverages in the privacy of your home, brother, that is liberalism in my book! It would seem hardly necessary to remind such a one of the sin of drunkenness and all of its evil effects. Yet, such an attitude on the part of one who should be *apt to teach* can but contribute to the sin.

When a preacher (or anyone) openly states that a bare-breasted woman in Africa would be modestly clothed because of the customs of that area, then that is liberalism in my book! Surely such a one must be aware of what the Bible has to say about the shame of nakedness. Such an idea would make complete nudity modest in a nudist colony. If not, why not?

When a preacher (or anyone) openly states that one may have been married several times without scriptural grounds for divorce and when he is baptized that such a one may continue with the wife that he has at the time of his baptism, brother, that is liberalism in my book! It's too bad that John the Baptist did not have the benefit of such wisdom(?) before he lost his head. After all, John was baptising folks *for the remission of sins*. Why did he not just try to convince Herod to be baptized, then it would be "lawful for him to have her"?

Brethren, while we are fighting the *liberals* on institutionalism, etc., let's not let Satan lull us into liberalism on matters of worldliness and morals.

-EDITOR

from GOSPEL GUARDIAN, Mar. 15.1975

HONOUR THE FACE OF THE OLD MAN

by Dan Walters

We live in a nation that has forgotten its elders. Columnist Andrew Tully recently observed the discourtesy

of salespersons to the elderly: "They are met, often, with a rudeness that is sometimes coarse. At a women's dress shop, I heard a saleswoman tell a lady of about 72: 'I keep saying, there's nothing here you can afford.' At a supermarket, a youth at a checkout counter told an old man fumbling with an ancient purse, 'C'mon grandpappy, get it up, get it up.' " Tully concludes that such scenes "reflect a nation's impatience with its aging — not just the infirm, but anyone whose appearance bears the imprint of December. The senior citizen is merely tolerated when he is not treated as a nuisance." Many believe that most older persons would be better off in institutions of one kind or another. Others would not deprive them of freedom, but have no use for their services or for their wisdom which can only come with long experience. Youth is celebrated, but age is dishonored.

When we deliberately cut ourselves off from communication with our elders, we lose much more than we realize. Judges 2:10 says, "And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel." Such a situation shows either the failure of the older generation to teach, or the failure of the younger generation to listen. Perhaps both are involved.

Through the ages man has been taught to "Honor thy father and thy mother," (Ex. 20:12; Matt. 15:4). Disobedience to parents is placed among the most revolting of sins, (Rom. 1:30). We are taught to honor not only our own parents, but the elderly in general. Lev. 19:32 says, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man..." Prov. 20:29 teaches, "The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the grey head."

Those who reject the counsel of age often do so to their own sorrow. Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, ignored the advice of his elders to lighten the yoke of government upon the people, and instead followed the foolish counsel of the young men to increase it. As a result he lost most of his kingdom (I Kings 12).

The open disrespect for age which is commonly expressed today is an abomination unto the Lord. There can be no excuse for even a young child showing such an attitude. II Kings 2:23,24 records this incident in the life of Elisha: "And he went up from thence unto Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him and said of him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head. And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them." This incident must be inexplicable to the modern mind. We think the sins of children very trivial. "Boys will be boys." But the God whom we serve makes it clear that children who dishonor their elders do not deserve to live on His earth.

God has always intended for the elderly to be the leaders of His people. The Jews in the Old Testament and the Christians in the New Testament were ruled by "elders." The word itself, though naming an office, denotes an older person. In the Patriarchal Dispensation God ruled His people through the heads of families, who were the fathers and grandfathers, the old men. In time past God did not speak unto the children by the prophets, but unto the fathers, (Heb. 1:1). We who are younger are told to submit ourselves unto the elder, (I Pet. 5:5). We are told to, "Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father," (I Tim. 5:1).

It is the duty of elder persons to teach and of younger persons to listen and heed. Titus 2:4 says that the aged women are to "teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed." Here we might again introduce the thought that either someone has failed to teach or someone has failed to listen. Young Timothy learned the scriptures from his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice, women of unfeigned faith, (II Tim. 1:5; 3:15). How much could he have learned from his grandmother if she had been sent off to an "old folks home"? It is only natural that, other factors being equal, the older a person is the more he knows and the more he is able to teach. Yet some churches today will not consider a man over sixty-five to work with them. They want a young man to work with the young people. Why not an old man to work with the young people? Didn't Paul work with young Timothy? Didn't Barnabas work with John Mark? The world seems to have gone mad on the subject of youth. (In case anyone thinks such remarks are self-serving, your writer is only thirty-two years old.)

This unfortunate attitude toward older persons is part of a broader philosophy which degrades everything that is old and elevates anything that is new. Some have an insane desire to cut themselves off from their very roots of history and tradition. No one is more a slave than he who is bound by time. We hear much of the "generation gap." The late E. Merrill Root said, "The real gap is not between the generations but between modern man and timeless man . . . between the fool and the wise man, between the brash and discourteous and the courteous and humble, between the human mistakes and the human achievements . . . Any 'gap' between the generations is as foolish as a 'gap' between the blossom of May and the apple of September." (*America's Steadfast Dream*.)

Those who choose their friends and associates from their own age group alone are depriving themselves of a priceless experience. From the generation now passing from the scene we can learn rich lessons not found in modern school books. A few years ago at a funeral of an elderly Christian, my good friend Ted Adams of

Longview, Texas, said to me, "We are seeing the last of a generation like we shall never see again." He was undoubtedly correct, since we are now living in a period of decline. But we as individuals can transcend time and gather to ourselves the timeless virtues. We must sit at the feet of our elders if we covet such wisdom.

The Weeping Prophet long ago admonished his people, "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." But the people said, "We will not walk therein." (Jer. 6:16). The Wise Man of old gave the warning: "Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set," (Prov. 22:28). The Book teaches that the old way is often the good way. Let us then read the old books and listen to the old men whom God has been good enough to leave among us for a while longer. "Honour the face of the old man."

from TRUTH MAGAZINE, Jan. 30, 1975

The Name Of The Divine Church

by Cecil Willis

We are living in an age in which people think the name of an organization is unimportant. People seem to have been swept off their feet by the adage, "There's nothing in a name!" Others prefer to quote Shakespeare attempting to prove the name of the church is unimportant, as he says, "a rose called by some other name would smell just as sweet." But there *is* something in a name, and in speaking of almost any object besides the church, men readily will admit there is much in a name. Would you be willing for your wife to be called by another's name? Or are you "narrow-minded" enough to think that since she is *your* wife, therefore she should wear *your* name? Is the name one wears really important? In speaking of this example all would admit that the name is important. If the name by which one is called is of no consequence, it should be perfectly all right to call a good American a "Communist," or a truthful man a "liar," or an upright citizen a "criminal." After all, if it be true that there is nothing in a name, it would make no difference what we are called. We realize there is something in a name.

But when it comes to spiritual matters, there is everything in a name. It is certainly important that we wear the right name. Men have deceived themselves into taking all too lightly the actions of God. When God calls the name of the church through the Apostles, it is a matter of tremendous consequence for a finite creature such as you or me to attempt to change the decree of God. It is an insult to God. It amounts to saying we are not pleased with what God has done, and that we feel we can improve upon it.

There is something in a name. Paul thought there was. He wrote to a church one time, in which people were wearing wrong names, and he reprimanded them for such divisive actions. He says: "For it hath been signified unto me concerning you, my brethren, by them that are of the household of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I mean, that each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized into the name of Paul?" (1 Cor. 1:11-13). Does this sound as though it makes no difference what name you wear? It certainly does not. Paul is saying it is wrong for you to wear the name of Paul, Peter, or Apollos. He says you should wear the name of Him into whose name you were baptized, and of Him who was crucified for you, which of course, is Jesus the Christ. To wear another's name would be sin. Yet when a passage is as plain as this, men and women seem to think nothing at all is wrong with them wearing the name of some preacher who is of much less importance than Paul or Peter.

Is there anything in a name? Let us read a passage from the Bible, and you may answer the question for yourself. I know, after considering this reference, you cannot answer the question incorrectly, if you will but consider it carefully. Peter, in speaking of Christ, says: "And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). There is salvation in no other name under heaven, than the name of Christ. And yet, people will tell you "There's nothing in a name." That just is not so! There is something in a name. There is salvation in a name. There is redemption in the name of Christ, and outside him one cannot be saved.

Names of the Church

The church is called by several names in the New Testament, each of which describes some specific aspect of it. When speaking of the church, we must use Biblical language. Even though there are many different names of the church stated in the Bible, there is but one body, one church. Let us now note some of the different titles by which the church is known.

By far, the most frequent appellation given the church is simply to call it the "church." In Acts 8:1 we read, "And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem." The word "church," in the original language of the New Testament, the Greek, means "a called-out body." This means that the church consists of people called out of the world, and set apart unto a life of righteousness. In Matt. 16:18, Jesus says "upon this rock I will build my church." The church, then, belongs to Christ. We read of another name given the church in 1 Cor. 1:1, 2: "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth." The church is here called "the church of God." This means the church was designed by God. In Acts 20:28, Paul tells the elders of the church at Ephesus to "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood." The church is the

"church of the Lord." It belongs to Christ.

Hence, when Paul comes to speak of a plurality of congregations of the Lord, he speaks of "churches of Christ." In Romans 16:16, Paul says "Salute one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ salute you." From this passage some have concluded that Paul was speaking of the different denominations within the church of Christ. But this is not so, for Paul condemned anything that resembled denominationalism in 1 Cor. 1, from which we just read. Further, in New Testament times there were no denominations. He was speaking of different congregations belonging to Christ. We may speak of the several thousand different congregations of the Lord in this country as "churches of Christ," for they are just that; they belong to Christ. He purchased them with his blood. We find the church called the "body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12), "the church of the living God" (1 Tim. 3:15), the "one body" (Eph. 4:4; 1 Cor. 12:13), the "church of the firstborn" (Heb. 12:23), the "kingdom" (Matt. 16:18), and many other such names. When members of the Lord's church come to speak of the church, they will speak of it in Bible language. They will call the church by a Bible name. The church is a Bible organization, and we should use a Bible name for it. A church not having a Bible name is not the Bible church.

It is apparent that men are not content to use Bible language in speaking of the church when you walk down the street and look at the names printed upon church buildings in any city. Look at some of these names, and then try to find them in your Bible. These names given by men are wrong because they are divisive in character, given to designate peculiar parties, sectarian in purpose and effect, separating some professed believers from others by some peculiar name, and therefore are antagonistic to the prayer of Christ recorded in John 17. These humanly devised names are condemned in the New Testament, as we read a moment ago from 1 Cor. 1. They give honor to some person, such as an outstanding preacher, or exalt some ordinance or form of government, thus diverting honor which duly belongs to Christ. These human names act as stumbling blocks to sinners, confuse honest truth seekers, and create the false impression that God has many churches, and that just any of them are all right.

Names of the Members of the Church

So far we have noticed the names by which the church is known in the New Testament. Now let us notice some of the different names by which the members of the church are known in the New Testament. It likely will be impossible for us to make special notation of all the names given, for our space is limited. (1) "Disciples" is one name given. "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them" (Acts 20:7). It should be observed that the word "disciples" is not the name of the church. It is the name given for those who make up the church. (2) "Saints." Disciples of the Lord were also called "saints" in the Bible. Most people think of a "saint" as one who has been dead several years; at least long enough for all to have forgotten his sins. But "saints" were living

Christians. Paul writes to the "saints" of the church in the city of Rome (Rom. 1:7). He wrote to living people. Some people take the word "saint," and try to name a church after it. This also is to misuse the name given. (3) "*Brethren*." In relation to each other the saints were called "*brethren*." They were all members of the family of God. Paul so names disciples of Christ, when he says that Christ "appeared to above five hundred *brethren* at once" (1 Cor. 15:6). We have denominations today that get their name from the word "brethren," which likewise is a misuse of the word. (4) "*Christian*" is another name given to the individuals who make up the church. In Acts 11:26, we read "the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." Paul almost persuaded Agrippa "to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28). Peter says "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this name" (1 Pet. 4:16). This term is always applied to members of the church; never is it given as a name for the church itself. So let us realize that the names given for the individuals who make up the church are not to be given as names for the church.

Neither the church, nor the members of the church have any one name; several are given for each in the Bible. But let us be sure that we are not presumptuous, in assuming a name for ourselves foreign to the Bible. The church is "the church of God," "the church of the Lord," "the body of Christ," the "one body," "the church of the firstborn," and many other names. Several congregations are "churches of Christ." Christians are "disciples," "brethren," "saints," "priests," "sons of God," "children of God," "heirs of God." We must remember that it is important that we wear the names given by God, for God did not give us names or commandments that are unimportant. Let us not assume that where God has spoken, man can either obey or disobey, and yet have God's approval.

We must wear the name of Christ for the church is the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22-33; 2 Cor. 11:2); the church is God's family, and thus should wear His name; whatever we do must be done in the name of Christ (Col. 3:17); it is only in his name that unity can ever be attained; and Paul says at the name of Christ every knee must bow (Phil. 2:9-11). The name of the church is of supreme importance. There is something in a name. "And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, where we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Salvation is in the name of Christ! "The Churches of Christ Salute You" (Rom. 16:16).

What saith the answer of God?

by Charles G. Maples, Sr.

QUESTION: "What is the meaning of the term, 'congregational autonomy'?"

ANSWER: Let us first note that this is NOT a Bible term, but it is certainly a BIBLE SUBJECT. You say, "how can this be?" Simply this; although you cannot find the word "Autonomy" in the Scriptures, the Bible clearly teaches that local congregations of the body of Christ are to be autonomous. **DEFINITION:** "Independent in government; self governing; also without outside control."--Webster's *New Collegiate Dictionary*.

Give careful consideration to the following Scriptures: The apostle Paul instructed the elders of the local church at Ephesus, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers..." (Acts 20:28); and we see that they "ordained elders in every church..." (Acts 14:23). At Philippi the church was made up of "saints...bishops and deacons" (Phil. 1:1).

From these Scriptures we see that the Lord ordained that each congregation should be COMPLETE; fully suited to do the work assigned it; with dependence, in any way upon any other congregation. Then in I Pet. 5:1-2 the apostle Peter charged elders to "feed the flock of God WHICH IS AMONG YOU, taking THE OVERSIGHT THEREOF..."; thus restricting the supervision of any one eldership to the congregation of which they are members...They have no God-given right to have anything to do with the work of another congregation!—such as is true with the "Sponsoring church" arrangement! In such an arrangement, both parties are guilty of violating God's law of autonomy — The "Sponsoring church" elders, by overseeing a work of flocks which are not "among (them)", and the contributing church, in that it is submitting a part of its work to "outside control"!

This is the Bible meaning of "congregational autonomy," and for any elders, group of elders, preacher or even "members" of one church to "meddle in matters" of a church of which they are not members is to violate the DIVINE PATTERN! While some elders and preacher CLAIM to believe in "Congregational Autonomy", they, at the same time meddle in some of the affairs of some church of which they are not part! "My brethren, these things ought not so to be"!

Address all questions to:
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Study your Bible daily.

Modernist Objections

Roland Worth, Jr.

No matter how strong a defense we make of the inability and authority of the Bible, there will always be someone who will object, "I had a professor in college who taught me the very opposite." Since this is run so often, a few comments would be appropriate.

1. Even college professors are not authoritative in EVERYTHING. They may be brilliant geniuses in their field of specialization, but once they move out of their area their opinion may be no more informed than John Q. Citizen who lives up the street from us. A few years ago Louis Cassels wrote a syndicated column that hits hard on the point we are stressing here, "You can count on it. Every few years, some 'scholar' will stir up a short-lived sensation by publishing a book which says something outlandish about Jesus. The 'scholar' usually has no standing as a Bible student, theologian, archaeologist or in any other field related to serious study of religious questions. But that need not hold him back. If he has a job — ANY JOB — at a university faculty, his 'findings' will be treated respectfully in the press as a 'scholarly work'" ("New Book Follows 'Jesus Myth' Path," **Richmond News Leader**, Richmond, Virginia, June 23, 1973, page 3). This point can hardly be over-emphasized. We Americans too readily give our college professors intellectual carte blanche. I recall one professor of mine who had a doctorate from a major Southern university. Yet this man was so ignorant on matters related to the Bible and Jewish history that in his ancient history class he actually called Josephus (the Jewish war leader and historian) a Christian prophet!

2. Even a professor's judgment may be nothing but a repetition of what he himself has been taught.

Since a skeptical attitude toward the Bible is the intellectual fashion of our age, it is not surprising that the biases of Modernist theology have been absorbed by those who will teach future generations. Often a professor will take a given position concerning religious matters NOT because the evidence actually pushes him to that conclusion BUT BECAUSE THAT IS THE ONLY THING HE HIMSELF WAS TAUGHT. He has not examined the philosophical foundations on which his skepticism is based and therefore passes it on to his students in complete unawareness of how weak are the foundations on which he has built!

3. Even a professor's judgment is no better than the evidence on which it is based. A professor's judgment has no INHERENT authority; the ONLY authority it has is provided by the evidence that backs up what he has to say. When the evidence is lacking, his judgment is no better than that of his students.

4. Even professors can be prejudiced.

a. Politically, this can be seen (to provide but one example) in the immense appeal that Fascism had to

German college professors and students in the 1930s. Joachim C. Fest, in his excellent study of this period, writes, "As early as March 3 (1933) three hundred university teachers of all political persuasions declared themselves for Hitler in an election appeal, while the mass of students had gone over to the National Socialist camp considerably earlier. As early as 1931 the party, with 50 to 60 per cent of the votes, enjoyed almost twice as much support in the universities as in the country as a whole. The dominant influence or rightist tendencies was as evident in the teaching staff as in the self-governing student body, which was largely controlled by the Union of National Socialist German Students" (**The Face of the Third Reich: Portraits of the Nazi Leadership**, translated from the German by Michael Bullock, Ace Books, New York: 1970, page 370).

b. Racially. We are not talking about DISLIKING a minority; we are talking about a dislike that results in hostile conduct REGARDLESS of the minority's personal virtues. Dr. Emery L. Rann, former head of the black National Medical Association discussed some of these intellectual rednecks at the 1974 national convention of his group. "A few years ago at a Big Ten university Dr. Rann said a professor proclaimed that 'no nigger would ever pass' his course. And there is a midwestern medical school with a professor of pathology who has admitted in faculty meetings that he is prejudiced, a 'redneck,' and cannot abide blacks. Dr. Rann charged. 'It is ironic that most of this sort of problem is in Northern schools — not in the Southland,' Dr. Rann noted" (Vernon Jarrett, columnist, "Black Medicine Facing Hurdles," **Chicago Tribune**, August 2, 1974, page 14).

c. Religiously. Here, too, supposedly educated leaders of the intellectual community fall into the trap laid by their own anti-supernatural biases. As Louis Cassels, UPI columnist and a man far removed from being a Fundamentalist remarks in one of his books, "Although radical skepticism glibly employs the language of scholarship, it is . . . NOT an 'open-minded' but a close-minded attitude. It ASSUMES that the Creator of the universe will NEVER under any circumstances intervene in its flow of events, and on the basis of that highly debatable hypothesis it would make liars of eyewitnesses who posted their lives as bond to their sincerity" (**Your Bible**, Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York: 1967, pages 9-10). "Those who approach the Bible with an attitude of radical skepticism often find it convenient to bolster their PRECONCEPTIONS with glib references to 'the assured results of modern criticism.' The ploy is easy to master: If you want to discredit any portion of the Bible, you simply say, 'Of course, modern criticism has shown that we can't put any stock in THAT.' This is hogwash. It is unfair to the scholars whose patient and objective investigations have cast so much helpful new light on the Bible. It also is an insult to the Bible" (page 8).

Perhaps we should give an example of **PRE-JUDICED INTELLECTUALS**. W. E. Albright, the famous archeologist, provides the following true story concerning the Dead Sea Scrolls.

"Even now some refuse to believe in the Dead Sea Scrolls, declaring that they're very late or that they're hoaxes! The founder of the hoax theory of the Dead Sea Scrolls sat in my office in Baltimore in the autumn of 1948, a few months after John Trever and E. L. Sukenik had first publicly recognized the antiquity of the scrolls. I tried to show the enlargements of some Leica prints which Trever had sent me, but **HE REFUSED EVEN TO LOOK AT THEM**, dismissing them with a wave of his hand as 'hoaxes.' 'I don't need to look at them. I **KNOW** they're hoaxes.' Since then I have **OFTEN** met New Testament **SCHOLARS** who have told me, 'Oh, I don't believe a word of what you say. I think it's all nonsense. I as a student of so-and-so at such-and-such a university (the American equivalent of 'Oxbridge')." I soon learned to reply, 'What have you read on the subject?' Back came the expected crusher, 'I don't waste any time on such stuff!' " (in David N. Freedman and Jonas C. Greenfield, **New Directions in Biblical Archaeology**, editors, Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York: 1969, pages 8-9). Need we say more?

5. Not all professors and scholars are Modernist.

There is a common misconception that all scholars and well educated men are **ALIKE**. This simply is not so. Their beliefs run the gauntlet just as do those of any cross section of Americans. There are believing scholars and atheist scholars and every shade of belief (or lack thereof) in between.

Let us take an example. C. Milo Connick, a non-conservative, writes in his study of the life of Christ, "We have consulted a score of scholars concerning the question, 'What did Jesus think of himself?' a bewildering variety of answers has emerged. Distinguished specialists are sure that Jesus considered himself to be the Messiah. Equally distinguished specialists deny this. Competent critics assert that Jesus identified himself with the Suffering Servant of II Isaiah. Equally competent critics repudiate the assertion. If we had space to examine the work of a second score of scholars, **THE DIVERSITY OF THOUGHT WOULD BE INCREASED**. It ranges from one end of the theological spectrum to the other — from prophet **TO PRE-EXISTENT SON OF GOD**" (**Jesus: The man, The Mission, and The Message**, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: 1963, page 311).

Hence scholarship does **NOT** present a solid front. Furthermore, scholarship is **GENUINE** scholarship **ONLY** to the degree to which there is evidence to back up a claim. Hence there is nothing improper in asking a **GENUINE** scholar what is the evidence behind a claim or opinion. If his commitment to scholarship and the pursuit of truth is greater than his philosophical predispositions, he will not object to answering your ques-

To the Women and Girls of the Assembly

If you want to appear as a Christian,
Then don't go around in disguise;
Wear clothing sufficient to cover yourself—
We don't want to look at your thighs!

Although sex madness surrounds us,
True Christians should all stand apart;
Let modesty prevail and quit sinning
By revealing what you really ought not.

We all hate these rotten new movies—
They come from the Devil, it's true;
But wake up, you blind, silly "Christians,"
And look what he's doing to you.

It's not only sad but embarrassing
When the lost you've invited come in,
To have their attention diverted
From worship to that which breeds sin.

So pray to the Lord for His guidance
To consider how others must feel;
For tempting some heart to adultery
May cause Him in wrath to deal.

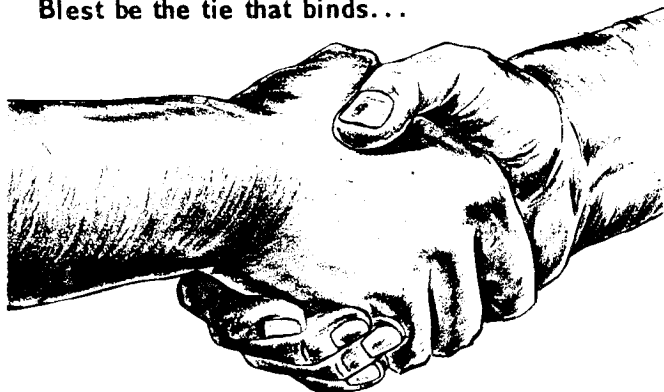
So don't come to God's house of worship
Half-dressed with the styles of today,
For the harm you may do in degrading
Could help drive some weak one away.

To you, it may seem a small matter
That you think could hardly relate;
But before you pass final judgment,
Ponder Matthew five twenty-eight.

So if you are really a Christian,
Then don't go around in disguise.
Wear clothing sufficient to cover yourself;
We don't want to pluck out our eyes.

—Jack D. Gupton, Rocky Mount, N.C.

Blest be the tie that binds...



our hearts in Christian love!

tion. If he **does** object or if he **can't** provide good evidence, it is a reasonable conclusion that on at least the immediate subject he has allowed his personal beliefs to become more important to him than the facts. **THAT** is a greater condemnation than the harshest words we could speak.

— 733 West Third
Madison, Indiana 47250

To Obey Or Not To Obey

Carol R. Lumpkin

When Saul was anointed King over Israel, Samuel spoke the following words to him, “Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass” (1 Sam. 15:3). Saul went and smote all the Amalekites, with the exception of King Agag which he brought back. He also brought the best of the sheep, and the oxen, and the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good (1 Sam. 15:7-9).

When Samuel was aware of what Saul had done, he said, “Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord?” (1 Sam. 15:19). Saul then replied, that he had obeyed the voice of God, even knowing that he had brought back the king. Saul also added that the people had brought the animals to make sacrifice to God. Samuel said, “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (1 Sam. 15:22).

As punishment for his disobedience Samuel said, “I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel” (1 Sam. 15:26). The lesson learned is that God’s word is clear and simple: it is not to alter or to

change to
 “For where we
 patience are
 (Rom. 15:4)
 not in the
 abideth
 Father and
 scripture
 to learn
 God will

written aforetime
 we through pa-
 night have hope’
 eth, and abideth
 ot God. He that
 e hath both the
 and many other
 expects, (1) man-
 ies, and (2) that
 om his word.

God see the cruel death
on the cross (Rom. 5:8; Heb.
5:9). The blood shed with the blood
of Christ subject to Christ in
all things and authority over the

church (Eph. 1:21-23). The Lord's church does only the works which God authorizes, no more and no less. These works are, "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the church, for the work of Christ" (Eph. 4:12). The church is the institution, designated to perform these works.

In New Testament days each local church was independent, self-governed, under elders (Acts 14:23; 20:28). Those elders were to feed, oversee, and shepherd the local church work (1 Pet. 5:1-3). The only work each church could do was determined by its ability, plus her opportunity. With each

tion working under the authority of Christ, everything was accomplished as God ordered it.

As Saul of old, men became dissatisfied with God's law, moved to improve or help God in spreading the gospel by establishing the Missionary Society in 1849. They acted as Saul, by not obeying the voice of the Lord. The Lord has spoken, the New Testament contains His will. The work of preaching the gospel cannot be transferred from the church to a human organization. It might appear to be the best way to do it, but remember Saul also thought it best to return the king and the best of the animals. God will not accept a change of His law. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15).

In the year 1859, some men decided they could improve upon God's order of worship; so they introduced the first mechanical instrument of music into worship. Whether it helped or hindered the singing is beside the point, they moved without divine approval. Those who used it then, as well as now, are not obeying the voice of the Lord. Vocal music is the only music God approves (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

The years rapidly come and go, while things written before have little or no bearing upon the thinking of men and women; so the first benevolent institution was founded in Tennessee in about 1909. Regardless of the good intentions the founders may have had, they failed to check the pattern to see if it pleased God. God's word just no where authorizes the church to do benevolent work through a benevolent society. The church is the **who** which is to work in taking care of the needy of the church. Read Acts 6:1-6; Acts 11:27-30; Rom. 15:25-26; 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 1 Tim. 5:16. If God rejected Saul for failure to exercise his will; by what stretch of the mind could one believe God accepts an alternate institution to care for the needy saints of the church?

Time moves along and brethren again with the same attitude that possessed Saul, decided to reject the voice of God and set up the sponsoring church arrangement. No church, under her elders, has the scriptural right to serve as a sponsoring church to preach the gospel over, say radio or television. The church has the right to preach the gospel over radio or television if she has the money to pay for such work. She does not have Bible authority to plan, oversee, or supervise that which she cannot support fully while urging or begging other

congregation is independent
the work done.

in one lesson from the story of
other Old Testament stories,
that he wants done, and that the
improve upon this, regardless of
the accomplished. We are going
of the Lord (Jno. 12:48). It is
more or it is too late, "Not our will,

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