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# THE REFLECTOR

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## THE "BUS MINISTRY" CRAZE

by Larry R. DeVore

The "Bus Ministry" appears to be sweeping the brotherhood like an outbreak of chicken pox. So far as I know, however, "conservative brethren" have not been infected as yet.

### WHAT IS A BUS MINISTRY?

So far as I can tell, you just buy an old bus, paint "CHURCH OF CHRIST" on the sides, and start a sectarian originated and motivated promotion campaign. It appears as another way to project a "good image" to the public. The use of the word "ministry" in connection with bus routes seems to be used in a denominational sense. The whole idea of calling every thing that we do a "ministry" is denominational in its concept. Paul told Timothy to ". . . make full proof of thy ministry" (2 Tim. 4:5b). What was the ministry he was to "prove"? Paul said, "Preach the word . . ." (v. 2). But today brethren have the "ministry of ushering", the "ministry of benevolence," and the "Bus Ministry." Where will it end? It would be far better to go back to calling "Bible things by Bible names." Brethren today have to have a whole new terminology just to keep "on the march."

### WHAT ARE BUSES USED FOR?

Supposedly, the buses are used to haul children, and / or aged persons to the meetinghouse for Bible classes and worship assemblies. But, the buses end up being used for many other things. Things that in no way expedite the work of the church. Usually, in fact, are **not** the work of the church. One church I know of, had a bus for quite a while and used it mainly to haul the teenagers to the roller-skating rink. Is this the work of the church? What passages authorize it? Recently this church purchased another bus, and is swept up in the "bus ministry" fever, and plans to buy two more. One close to me suggested, not altogether facetiously, that they needed two, one to go to the skating rink, and another to drive to the dances. That is not too far-fetched. The same church held an all-night prom-party for the teen-aged members who

were so "burdened" with Christianity they couldn't go to the Prom.

### ARE BUSES SCRIPTURAL?

I believe the Scriptures would authorize the use of a bus if the circumstances dictated the need for such. As the Scriptures authorize the paying of a preacher for his expenses in traveling to a place to preach the gospel (Mk. 16:15-16; 1 Cor. 9:14), then the possibility arises of a circumstance where it might be expedient to spend funds to bring the people to the preacher. In our modern society, it would seem that such circumstances would indeed be rare, but if so, then it would be scriptural. But often, if a bus is purchased because of a scriptural necessity, then the bus is also used for other purposes (i.e. trips to amusement parks, roller rinks, etc.) thereby destroying its scripturality.

### WHAT ABOUT COKES, CUPCAKES, & OTHER GIMMICKS?

Several brethren have written clearly and pointedly about physical reward motivations to get people to attend Bible classes, or worship services. Such practise is not authorized in God's word. In John 6:26 Jesus condemns those who were following Him, "because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." Bro. Clifton Inman, Editor of The Bible Herald, published at Parkersburg, W. Va., and who is certainly not known as being an "anti", wrote pointedly on this in the Aug. 15th, 1973 issue. He said, "If it is wrong to serve out of a desire for worldly rewards, it is wrong to entice one to serve from such a desire. To offer candy, cookies, toys, etc. to get children to attend Bible study is wrong. To offer the sensational is wrong." (pg. 4) "It is time that we learn righteous motives for our actions and follow them and not try to justify false and sinful motives. The one who makes his belly his god will use good words and fair speeches to deceive and divide. (Romans 16:17-18)." (pg. 5)

I certainly agree with these needed words from Bro. Inman. We need to return to the sanity of God's word that we might recover from this attack of the "Bus Ministry" craze. Think about it, brethren.

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# DOES THE LORD APPROVE CHRISTIANS DEBATING?

By Ron Halbrook

Yes! Without a doubt! Many people would say, "No, it's unchristian." The modern idea about what is "christian" or what the Lord approves is a far cry from Bible teaching. The dictionary says to debate is to contend in words, to discuss a question by considering opposed arguments or views. It may or may not include formal propositions and rules of procedure. Debate is a verbal study, answer, defense, discussion. Paul was "set for" it, Peter said he "always ready" to engage in it (Phil. 1:17; I Pet. 3:15).

Doesn't Romans 1:29 (KJV) place debate with sin? For today's English, "debate" is a poor translation of the Greek word *eris*. The word indicates bitterness and ugly strife such as grows of envy, brawling, and deceit. **Vine's Dictionary of New Testament Words**, Vol. II, pg. 82, explains it as "the expression of enmity" or hatred. It might be translated "quarrel" — an unfriendly, angry, or violent dispute. Hypercritical, unreasonable faultfinding, raising trivial objections. Such is not even a 42nd cousin to true debating in love of truth and the souls of men.

Our Lord debated, disputed, and discussed the things concerning his kingdom throughout his ministry. He did it in a spirit of genuine love, but that kind of love is poorly understood today. Men have always been amazed, even dismayed, at such love. "And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (John 2:17).

On Pentecost after Jesus arose, "the wonderful works of God" for man's salvation were preached in many languages by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-11, 15). Some who heard the Good News challenged the speakers (vs. 12-13). They were debating — offering verbal arguments; Peter heartily accepted the challenge and laid forth a whole series of arguments. After hearing both sides of the discussion, hearts and minds were enlightened as to the truth (vs. 40f). From this time on, repeatedly, preaching included debating — **striving against** the arguments raised to question the gospel, **striving for** the whole counsel of God.

"The gospel doesn't have to be debated, it can take care of itself," we sometimes hear. It is true that none of us is indispensable to God, but God Himself gave Christians the responsibility to spread the truth in the face of all opposition. Even the duty to be militant, to be aggressive, i.e. to debate! Paul was not indispensable, but notice how he fulfilled his duty. He disputed or debated concerning the gospel "in the synagogue," and "for three months" at one place, even "daily in the school of one Tyrannus" (Acts 17:17; 19:8-9).

Every New Testament epistle advocates the truth and specifically disputes some error concerning the gospel. Not one of them identifies earnest and sincere discussion as wrong or useless. Paul and Barnabas had "no small" disputation with erring brethren at Antioch. They travelled to Jerusalem, where the matter was vigorously debated with "much disputing;" Peter put his hand to this good work with Paul (Acts 15). The text uses the word disputing and Greek dictionaries use the word debate in defining that action. See other examples in Acts 24:10-25:8 and 26:1-2, 24.

Cars, guns, Bibles, and debates can be abused — that doesn't make the thing itself wrong. The Bible warns against the abuse of preaching and debating. (1) Phil. 1:15-17 shows that **WRONG MOTIVES AND ATTITUDES** must be avoided. Love of truth, souls, and Christ must prevail. Truth, not self, must be promoted. (2) **WRONG PROPOSITIONS** should be avoided (I Tim. 1:4). "Fables and endless genealogies" are not proper subjects for preaching or debating. Matters that do not affect **Bible doctrine** should not be debated.

Foy E. Wallace said, "The spirit of pacificism is taking the fight out of the church. But the conflict between truth and error is unending . . . The church grew when the fight was waged, and the battle raged. When the let up came in the fight, the let down came in the church. It is said that the sectarians do not fight anymore. That is because the church has quit fighting, and they have nothing to fight. If gospel preachers will fight now as preachers fought then, the denominations will fight now as they fought then . . . And truth will triumph now as it did then. Shall we yield to the line of least resistance, or shall we challenge error in its strongholds and its citadels?"

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## HEART

Did you know that your heart, if normal, beats approximately 100,000 times every day, a million times every ten days, and between 36 and 38 million times every year? Every hour, your heart expends enough energy to carry a 150-pound man from the street level to the roof of a three-story building. Every day, it pushes from five to ten tons of blood (depending upon the size of your body) through your blood vessels. If you attain your allotted threescore and ten years, your heart, in the course of those 70 years, will have exerted enough force to lift the world's largest battleship fourteen feet out of the water! - Sunshine Magazine.

## Rising Concern



People nowadays are showing more concern with the higher things of life—especially prices.



# Using the SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

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## THE PROFITABLENESS OF CHRISTIANITY

To those who "seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," spiritual, physical, mental, emotional and material blessings are promised. Dr. S. I. Mc-Millenn has written a very interesting book based upon Exodus 15:26 where God called Israel to obedience and promised as a reward, "I will put none of these diseases upon them."

I'm not a Christian Scientist. I believe that disease and pain are real, and that the righteous suffer and die. But I also believe that there would be less illness and longer lives if people would live by the commandments of God. Also there would be more purity and spirituality in our lives if we would recognize sin and its consequences and cease trying to appear righteous while living with a guilty conscience.

Dr. Karl Menninger, psychiatrist and co-founder of the famed Topeka, Kansas clinic which bears his name, has written an article entitled "Whatever Became of SIN?"

He began by calling attention to a man who stood on a street corner in Chicago pointing to each pedestrian and uttering the single word "GUILTY!" One man turned to another and asked, "But how did HE know?" Dr. Menninger then said, "The solemn accuser on the Chicago street has had many predecessors. Many centuries have passed since the Hebrew seers preached the importance of a moral code—preached and warned and exhorted and died. Human beings have become more numerous, but scarcely more moral."

Dr. Menninger, along with many other psychiatrists, psychologists, sociologists and physicians are now recognizing what Christians have known for a long time, namely, that much of the illness and anxiety of our time is caused by ignorance of sin or an effort to ignore it or lessen its effects by calling it by some high-sounding and more acceptable term. The doctor said:

"In all of the laments and reproaches made by our contemporary seers and prophets, one misses any mention of 'sin,' a word which used to be a veritable watchword of prophets. The disappearance of the word 'sin' involves a shift in the allocation of responsibility for evil. Its obsolescence may be a clue to fundamental changes in the moral philosophy of our civilization.

"The word 'sin' was once a proud word. It was once a

strong word, an ominous and serious word. It described a central point in every civilized human being's life plan and lifestyle. But the word went away. It has almost disappeared—the word, along with the notion. Why? Doesn't anyone sin anymore? Doesn't anyone believe in sin?

"I believe there is 'sin' which is expressed in ways which cannot be subsumed under verbal artifacts such as 'crime,' 'delinquency,' 'deviancy.' There is immorality; there is unethical behavior; there is wrongdoing. And there is usefulness in retaining the concept, and indeed the word, SIN. I have in mind behavior that violates the moral code or the individual conscience or both; behavior which pains or harms or destroys my neighbor—or me, myself.

"The wrongness of the sinful act lies not merely in its nonconformity (its departure from the accepted, appropriate way of behavior) but in an implicitly aggressive quality—a ruthlessness, a hurting, a breaking away from God and from the rest of humanity, a partial alienation, or act of rebellion."

Commenting further, Dr. Menninger said:

"We suspect—indeed we **know**—that there are still some old-fashioned homemade sins lying around which go unmarked. And for most of us, believers and non-believers, there is always that still small voice of our conscience. The forms of sin in the traditional list of seven were envy, anger, pride, sloth, avarice, gluttony, and lust. Curiously—to our thinking today—none of the lists included dishonesty, vindictiveness, cruelty, bigotry, or infidelity.

"If one wanted to find a germinal word to link all sins, perhaps **hate** would do it. In terms of action, however, the long-term consequences of hate are self-destruction. Thus, the word 'sin' does carry an implication of cost, of penalty, of answerability. The wages of **some** sins are death, without doubt; and the wages of lesser sins, while less than death, are substantial, including reparation, restitution, and atonement."

One of the problems of our day in almost every human relationship, including Christianity, is the loss of individuality. One student said that the only time he got individual attention on the college campus was when he spindled his IBM card. People do things—good or bad—in crowds that they would not do individually. Often ambitious leaders with evil designs seize the advantages of mob psychology. Some people feel that by acting as a part of a group they lose individual identity, responsibility and accountability. Not so! Consider what the doctor said on this:

"As people have become more numerous we have ceased to be so completely individualistic and have joined together in many ways to do and to share many things, including responsibility for crime and sin.

"If a group is guilty of an act that would be a crime for an individual to do, just how much blame **should** the participant individuals take upon themselves personally? If four 'thugs' cooperate in a robbery or murder, all are usually accounted guilty and punished. But suppose 400 or 4,000 persons join in the crime?

What then is the moral responsibility of the individual? If the group activity were a constructive one, each individual would certainly receive—at least claim—a certain amount of the benefit and also the credit. In the case of destructive acts, are only the officers guilty?

“If a dozen people are in a lifeboat and one of them discovers a leak near where he is sitting, is there any doubt as to his responsibility? Not for having **made** the hole, or for finding it, but for attempting to repair it! To ignore it or to keep silent about it is almost equivalent to having made it!

“Thus even in group situations and group actions, there is a degree of personal responsibility, either for doing or for not doing—or for declaring a position about it. The word ‘sin’ involves these considerations, and upon this I base the usefulness of a revival of the concept, if not the word, sin.

“My proposal is for the revival or reassertion of personal responsibility in all human acts, good or bad. Not total responsibility, but not zero either. To revive the half-submerged idea of personal responsibility and to seek appropriate measures of reparation might turn the tide of our aggressions and of the moral struggle in which much of the world population is engaged.

“We will see our world dilemmas more and more as expressing **internal** personal moral problems instead of seeing them only as **external**, social, legal, or environmental complexities.”

Dr. Menninger offered some sound and timely advice in the following statements:

“Buddha, Confucius, Lao-tze, Socrates, Zeno, and all the Hebrew prophets from Amos to Jesus taught that sin, hate, alienation, aggression—call it what you will—could be conquered by love. To transcend one’s own self-centeredness is not a virtue; it is a saving necessity.

“The message is simple. It is that concern is the touchstone. Caring. Relinquishing the sin of indifference. This recognizes acedia as the Great Sin; the heart of all sin. Some call it selfishness, some call it alienation, some call it schizophrenia, some call it egocentricity. Some call it separation—another word not only for sin, but for mental illness, for crime, for nonfunctioning, for aggression, for alienation, for death. Some prefer one or the other, but all these words describe the same thing.

“Thus, as an operative term **sin** has this value: it identifies something to be eliminated or avoided.

“And what would be the good of that? someone asks. Do we need more breastbeaters? Shall we add depression to the already mentioned gloom and world uneasiness? Why not a ‘no-fault’ theology, equivalent to no-fault casualty insurance: no one to blame? Things happen, alas? The assumption that there is sin in it somewhere implies both a possibility and an obligation for intervention. Hence sin is the only hopeful view.”

His concluding remarks were:

“Neither theologian nor prophet nor sociologist, I am a doctor, speaking the medical tongue with a psychiatric accent. For doctors, health is the ultimate

good, the ideal state of being. And mental health—some of us believe—includes all the healths: physical, social, cultural, and moral (spiritual). To live, to love, to care, to enjoy, to build on the foundations of our predecessors, to revere the constant miracles of creation and endurance, of ‘the starry skies above and the moral law within’—these are acts and attitudes which express our mental health.

“Yet, how is it, as Socrates wondered, that ‘men know what is good, but do what is bad?’”

And the Bible says: “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth” (III John 2).

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