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Should We Call Men Reverend?

By Everett Sturgeon
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Men the world over are accustomed to being addressed as Pastor, Rector, Father, Rabbi, Bishop, Cardinal, Pontiff, Pope, Holy Father, Reverend, and even Lord! Most of these same men teach their followers that there is nothing in a name, the name isn't important, the name makes no difference, etc., but just try taking away their high titles and you will hear a different story!

God caused the word REVEREND to be recorded ONE TIME in the Bible. It is found at the end of a series of expressions of praise to the Lord, and is used in part as a title expressing respect, honor and praise that only the Lord deserves. *"Praise ye the Lord. I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation. He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: Holy and reverend is his name. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever."* (Psa. 111:1, 9-10)

Respect, honor and praise are more and more being applied to men, and less and less to the Lord. But who can be likened to him? What man is worthy of it? What man should want it? *"Praise ye the Lord. Praise, O ye servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord. Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and for evermore. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the Lord's name is*

to be praised. The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high." (Psa. 113:1-5)

The apostles were chosen of the Lord and given the Holy Spirit to guide them in all things. The Spirit brought to their remembrance the words of Christ (John 14:26; 16:13). The words of Christ FORBID THE USE OF RELIGIOUS TITLES (Matt. 23:1-12). Some men today claim that they are guided by the Holy Spirit, separate and apart from the written word, but this could not be the same Spirit that guided the apostles, for the apostles refused high titles (Acts 14:8-18); yet men today solicit high titles! The apostles refused praise and glory (Acts 10:25-26; 14:8-18); even the angels of heaven refused the exaltation of men (Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9); but men today like and encourage it!

The apostles didn't hang high titles on one another. They referred to themselves and each other by name - Peter, James, John, Paul, etc. Notice how Peter referred to Paul: *"...account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you."* (2 Pe. 3:15) He did not refer to Paul as The Most Reverend Paul. Such would have been most ridiculous!

Today, many of those wearing these high religious titles, when

speaking of the Lord's apostles, will refer to them as "Old Peter" or "Old Paul," but will become offended when some of us refuse to honor their titles, referring to them only by the name given to them by their parents.

Let us be careful that we do not exalt ourselves or others above that which is written (1 Cor. 4:6). Jesus said, *"But be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ"* (Matt. 23:3-10). The inspired scriptures will serve as proof that the apostles were obedient to those words. Such practice on their part is not in the Bible. I believe you will agree with me that if ever a man or group of men deserved the honor of religious titles, it would surely be those inspired, holy men of God.

Let us be as the apostles, and when we are asked why we do not call men "Reverend," let us answer with the words of Job: *"I will speak, that I may be refreshed: I will open my lips and answer, Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man. For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my maker would soon take me away."* (Job 32:20-22)

Let us respect men for what they are and let us respect the Lord as the Lord of Lords, the Prince of Princes. Let us not take upon ourselves the honorable titles applied by the word of God to the Son of God. *"Let us praise the name of the Lord; for his*

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Should We Call Men Reverend?

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name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven" (Psa. 148:13). "The works of his hands are verity and judgement; all his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness. He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name." (Psa. 111:7-9)

Sons of Adoption

By Terry S. Frizzell

Once there was a young woman with a baby son. Because of circumstances they were without the care of a husband and father.

Then the woman met a man that she loved and he in turn loved her. After they were married he provided for both her and her son, even to the adopting of the young boy.

As the years passed the young boy, even though knowing of the adoption, thought of himself as a son by birth to this man he called dad. The father also seemed to feel the same as he taught the young boy, as a godly father should teach his son.

Often, as the years passed, people would comment about the likeness of the father and son, even though their physical stature was quite dif-

ferent. In fact many people did not know that he was only a son of adoption.

The likeness people saw was the result of the love the son had toward the father. Every time someone would mention a likeness of the two, the son would stand tall with much pride that people thought he was like his father.

In 2 Cor. 6:17-18 we read, "*Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*"

Just as the young boy was adopted, so are we that are Christians. Just as he loved his father, so must we love God. As this boy became like his father, because of his love for him, so the Christian will become in the image of God, and have characteristics of godliness by the love that he has for God.

By obedience to Jesus Christ we become the sons of God. (Gal. 4:4-5). In fact he has chosen those that obey Christ to be His adopted sons. (Eph. 1:4-5)

Christians should become more godly as they grow older because of the influence of the Father upon their lives.

What about you? When people see you, do they know who your Father is by your actions, or must they ask?

They should be able to see God by the life you live as His child.

Which Church Shall I Join?

By Dennis R. Smith

"Joining the church" has been an expression with some people for a long time. You will hear folks jokingly say, "Did you know that

old man so-and-so joined the church last week. I wonder if it will make any change in him."

Men can be the most cruel of all creatures when they want to be. To make fun of a man for taking steps to improve his life is hinging on the verge of mockery. The saddest part of the whole thing is that God has never asked men to "join the church." It is for sure that the New Testament says much about the church; that Jesus is identified by the Apostle Paul as the "head of the church" (Eph. 1:23, Col 1:18) and that Jesus died for the church (Eph. 5:25, Acts 20:28); BUT when it comes to the subject of joining the church there is nothing said about it at all in the Bible. In-as-much as the Bible is silent on the subject, certainly there must be regrets in heaven when a man is said to have, 'Joined the church of his choice.' Another sad thing is that men, (most men) do not understand what the scriptures teach on the subject of IDENTITY with the church and thus they enter into a relationship with a church in all sincerity buy at the same time do not understand that the scriptures do not authorize the move they have made. What then is the proper procedure of "identity with the church" that would be in harmony with the scriptures? Let's observe the following:

When a person makes a move in the right direction (in keeping with God's ordinances) there are several things that take place at the same time - one of which is God's adding him to the church. There does not need to be any formalities of "voting" on one entering the church since the church of the New Testament does not exist in a building and since the organizational structure of the New Testament church prohibits anyone but Christ determining who enters the church and who does not. Let us take a look at the first members of the New Testament church. In Acts chapter 2 the Apostle Peter, in whom Jesus had given the "keys of the king-

dom", (Matt. 16:19) preached the first sermon under the new covenant of Christ. When men and women on that occasion were "pricked in their hearts" and asked what to do, Peter declared: "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:38) In compliance with the words of Peter many "gladly received his word and were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." ...and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." From these passages one has to conclude that salvation and church membership are simultaneous. Terms that people are more familiar with today are: "Conversion, salvation, obeying the gospel, born again, being saved, converted, etc." These terms are all scriptural and are all congruent with church membership. In other words, when one happens they all happen. There is no evidence of a person "being saved" and then "joining the church of his choice later." A person whose name has been "added to the Lamb's book of life" is a person who has just been saved, who has just been born again, who has just been converted, who has just obeyed the gospel and who has JUST become a Christian.

One of the big mistakes that we make in identifying ourselves with some religious body as we associate it with God, is that we forget God's organization is not made with hands, but rather is a kingdom eternal. It does exist "both in heaven and on earth" (Eph. 3:15) but the dictates (or rules) are made by God. We want to do things by earthly standards. We want to enter the church as we would a civic organization - thus we feel as though much of the same format or rules should apply. In determining the "terms for membership" often we want to draft up standards that would allow us to "screen" those who are entering. In the Bible Jesus taught "*Whosoever will may come and take of the water*

of life freely." (Rev. 21:17) There were, of course, certain commandments that were followed by the early church (faith, repentance, confession of Christ as God's Son, baptism for remission of sins) that placed the subject IN CHRIST. (Gal. 3:26-27) When these were obeyed "from the heart" ALL of the aforementioned things took place: God saved them! Their names were added to Lamb's book of life! They were converted! They automatically became members of the church for God now had added them to his family!

In answer then to the question of our title "Which church shall I join" let me say that it would be safe to simply obey the same things that the early Christians obeyed and then let God take care of your church membership. If that is not the safe course, then what is?

Why Doesn't It Just Die?

By Ted Knight

To listen to some our brethren you would think that the church is just on the brink of death. When they look at the church all they see is weakness, unfaithfulness, and concern. What they fail to realize is that we usually see exactly what we look for. It seems to me that if the church is as bad off as some would have us think it is that the church should just fold up and die. Certainly if there has ever been an institution that deserves the right to do so it is the church of our Lord. The church has been insulted, abused, ridiculed, laughed at, copied, attacked by skeptics, and forsaken by many of Her own people. Some of those who still claim membership in the church are so unconcerned and uncommitted that they pose a problem for Her. Others who should love Her more than anything else on earth love Her less. If She could have been killed by discouragement, She would have died a long time ago. She is old enough to have died of old age. To many people She is out of date and ill equipped to deal with problems of the twentieth century.

Though many of these things be true, the church of Christ stands today as a force against evil as She has through the centuries past. She is still beautiful and strong. She stands through those who have fought Her are already gone or will soon perish. She may have battle scars but still She stands offering hope and security to those who will come to Her. It seems that She always is there in our time of trouble and sorrow. By the scores men still love and respect Her. She is march-

ing forward in the face of opposition and defection from within Her own ranks. Never before have so many been reached with the good news of their salvation.

Thank God for the church. I love Her. She will never die. She is worthy of our love and devotion. We owe our best to Her. The day will come when Jesus will present Her to the Father. She will be rid of the battle scars and will stand victorious over all forces. May God help each of us to give our best for the church in every way.

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JUST A COMMENT

By Mike Pace, Editor

I included an article entitled "Church Leadership Today - Is It Scriptural?" in Vol. 18, No. 11, Nov., 1984, issue of this paper. The article was written by a member of the Lord's church by the name of Manuel DeOliveira. I edited this article as I do all articles that are considered for print or reprint. I did then, and still do, perceive the intentions of the author as an indication of his reasonable concern for effective, scriptural leadership in the church today. There were a couple of statements that were made in the article that I feel must either be explained or corrected. I shall then exercise my right and privilege as editor of this paper to make such changes.

The author made the following statement: "The present trend to have elders and fully supported

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"Ministers" working together cannot be defended scripturally." I agree with this statement if the author is inferring that we have no *specific* example in scripture of such a working relationship. I Cor. 9:1-14 includes provisions for the church to support a minister of the gospel financially. Elders of the church are to feed the flock, Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:1-3, and God has allowed them the freedom to exercise whatever means they wish (within scriptural bounds) to accomplish this feeding. Traditions, customs and logical expediencies today usually find congregations of the church today served by elders who are working hand in hand with a fully supported minister of the gospel. Perhaps this working relationship cannot be defended scripturally, but it certainly falls within the realm of those expediencies permitted by God to accomplish His work.

Another point in the article which may need some clarification is point 3, which stated that evangelists "only stayed in a congregation as long as there was a doctrinal problem to solve or in order to appoint elders and deacons, after that they moved on to the next city." Neither was it stated, nor did I understand this point to suggest that these evangelists Timothy or any other evangelist), *had* to leave as soon as their work was done. I Timothy 1:3 and Titus 1:5 seem to indicate that Timothy and Titus each were part of that 1st century task force of gospel preachers who were commissioned by the Lord and understood apparently quite well their integral part of establishing very well a broad base of well-grounded congregations for the Lord's church while in its infancy. It seems apparent from the instructions that were given to Timothy and Titus, as well as other inferences, that these first century evangelists were primarily concerned with establishing as many congregations as possible and with assisting with many of the doctrinal problems which were arising. Paul besought (asked) Timothy to "abide

still" at Ephesus, suggesting that perhaps Titus was about to depart Ephesus bound for other work. With the diversity of the Lord's church today in so many parts of the world and the number of preachers today (even though that number is dwindling), it seems much more practical for gospel preachers to be "located" in one area with perhaps one congregation for longer extended periods of time.

And then finally, let's mention point 4 in that article. It seems that a small few have misunderstood the premise of this point. It *is* true with many congregations throughout the brotherhood that a distinct line has been hypothetically drawn between the minister and the members of that congregation. If this is not true at the congregation where you worship, then you should be commended for not falling into this pitfall. The Lord did not make any provisions for anyone to have preeminence over anyone else in His church. Elders have certain rights, (Eg. "worthy of

double honor"), but nobody, ministers included, has the right to expect or demand preeminence over anyone else. I understand the author to attempt to discourage the unfortunate distinction that Christians sometimes make between the ill-termed "Clergy and laity". I rebuke sternly any minister of the gospel who elevates himself to such a status or *allows* anyone to feel as such about him. The author's intention in the above mentioned point should be understood as a discouragement to all those who make up the Lord's church to in any way elevate the minister to a status which God does not allow. It makes no difference how *much* or how *little* education one has; whether he has gone to a preacher's school or graduated from a university; or whatever his so-called credentials are, "THERE IS NEITHER JEW NOR GREEK, THERE IS NEITHER BOND NOR FREE, THERE IS NEITHER MALE NOR FEMALE: FOR YE ARE ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS." (Galatians 3:28).

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