

# THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

January 18

2009

## Christianity, Not Churchanity

I have known of preachers stating that they preach Christianity, not churchanity. What were they endeavoring to convey in making such a statement? I may not fully understand what they have in mind by stating such, but it appears that they would have their hearers believe that one can separate Christ from His church. By preaching Christianity, they would have individuals believe in some of the principles that Christ taught and gave for us to believe. By churchanity, they are picturing individuals trusting in the church for salvation without the proper emphasis upon Christ. They are wanting people to believe that one can follow Christ and give little or no regard for His church. To attach real importance to the church is, in their theology, what it means to preach churchanity.

To my knowledge, neither the word Christianity or churchanity are found in the scriptures. We are to preach the word which involves the doctrine of Christ. (II Timothy 4:2) (I Timothy 4:16). When this is done, both Christ and His church are emphasized. In condemning what some preachers call churchanity, they vehemently declare that the church saves no one. According to them, it is Christ that saves and not the church! I do not deny this, but they are overlooking the truth that Christ saves the church. “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.” (Ephesians 5:23). Christ saves the body which is His church. “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.” (Ephesians 1:22-23). His body is His church and He is the saviour of his body, the church which is the

fullness of Christ. If preaching this is what some call churchanity, then this preacher is guilty of it and thankful to be able to bear the guilt. Men may manufacture words like churchanity to deceive others, but what they are advocating is that one can be saved without being in the Lord’s church and that the church is not essential. It is the old denominational concept of accepting Christ and ignoring what the scriptures say about His church.

**Is The Church Overemphasized? Are We Guilty Of Churchanity?** In answering these questions, we need to truly understand some characteristics of the church as stated in Ephesians 5:23-27. **The Church Is That Which:**

**Christ is the head.** “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church”. (Ephesians 5:23). “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,” (Ephesians 1:22). This truth is also mentioned in Colossians 1:18: “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.” Are we to conclude that Christ is the head of something that is not essential or important to our salvation? Is this what some mean by preaching churchanity?

**Christ saves.** “and he is the saviour of the body.” (Ephesians 5:23). We have previously noticed that the body is the church and this is what Christ saves. When one obeys the gospel, the obedient person is added to the church. “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved”. (Acts 2:47). The church is the saved and one can not separate the saved in Christ from His church. When this truth is preached, is one preaching what some call churchanity?

**Christ loved.** “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church,” (vs.25). Are we to conclude that Christ loved something that was of little value to us? The fervent love that Christ had for the church is to characterize the love of a husband for his wife. When I preach this beautiful truth, am I guilty of churchanity?

**For which Christ gave himself.** “and gave himself for it”. (Ephesians 5:25). Christ died for the church. Speaking to the Ephesian elders, Paul spoke of the church “which he hath purchased with his own blood.” (Acts 20:28). Christ gave himself in purchasing the church with his own blood. The church is blood bought by the precious blood of Christ. This passage in Ephesians 5:23-27 further

states the precious truth: "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church," As one has said: "I hear preachers saying, 'I preach Christianity, not churchanity.' Shame on them! It is impossible to teach the full story of Jesus Christ and not teach about Him as the "tried stone," the foundation stone, the builder of His church." (Isaiah 28:16). *✍ Bobby K. Thompson*



## Church Autonomy

"Autonomy" is a compound word, composed of *autos*, meaning "self," and *nomos*, meaning "law." An ordinary dictionary will tell us the word means "self-ruled," so that an autonomous church is "self-governed, without outside control."

There are those who reject the concept of God and revelation, saying ultimate authority is in man. To them there would be no limitations placed upon self-rule. Of course most of our readers accept Christ as King, and know that a church which wishes to exercise "self rule" in *all* things is not the church of Christ. But our brethren are far from clear on the legitimate (scriptural) field of self rule, and how this affects the relation of one church to another. Some seem to think "autonomy" means the right to devise organizational arrangements for which there is no N.T. authority; while others think calling attention to such error violates the "autonomy" of the erring brethren.

A church can not "rule" on the importance of Christ's death, the necessity of faith, the meaning and purpose of baptism; for these are legacies of truth which Christ gave the world and by which we are called. The church is the product of the gospel, not its author. One would not violate some church's autonomy by teaching along these lines, for no church has a legitimate "say" in such things.

Does God give a local church the right to decide the day of worship? May they "rule" on the need for assembling, or the so-called "items" of acceptable worship? It is not clear that even in those things assigned as church (team) activity, a distinction must be made in that which is part of "the faith, once for all delivered unto the

saints" (over which the congregation has no rule), and such details as are left to human judgement. The field of church autonomy is that of human judgement, and that only.

As an example: God's word indicates the day on which saints are to partake of the Lord's Supper — but it does not specify the *time* of day. The *time* is left to human judgement, and therefore to the "rule" of brethren. A church exercises autonomy when it sets its own *time* of assembling — and we might add, that *time* rests upon human authority, not upon divine mandate. Each church has this same right and may choose different times. If one sought to unduly influence or alter another's *time* of meeting, this would be interfering with "autonomy."

But if one church should declare Thursday the Lord's Day, others could seek to teach them more perfectly the way of the Lord — and violate no legitimate "autonomy" in doing so — for no church has the scriptural right to "rule" in matters God has settled.

When brethren have honest differences in their understanding of what God has said, one church may believe their "ruling" is done in matters of judgement, while another may believe they violate plain teachings of God. If both parties are equally interested in serving God, neither will rest the case in "our rights," but will be happy to study God's word together so that God can rule supremely in all.

*✍ Robert F. Turner*

<b><i>Belleville church of Christ</i></b>	
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<a href="http://www.bellevillechurch.net">www.bellevillechurch.net</a>	
<b>Schedule of Services</b>	<b>Elders</b>
Sun. Bible Study. . . . . 9:30 a.m.	Charles Carpenter. . . (317) 839-3873
Sun. Morning Worship. . . . 10:30 a.m.	James Hahn. . . . . (317) 745-1507
Sun. Evening Worship. . . . . 5:00 p.m.	
Wed. Bible Study. . . . . 7:00 p.m.	
<b>Evangelist</b>	<b>Deacons</b>
James Hahn. . . . . (317) 745-1507	Leon Nevins . . . . . (317) 272-2966
	Don Perry. . . . . (765) 676-5825
	Alvin Stanley. . . . . (317) 831-3514