

—Thoughts on the name “Christian”—

“I, then, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond peace: one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

—The apostle Paul, Ephesians 4:1-7, NAB

A “Christian” (Hebrew: ‘Messianist’) is a person who has faith in Jesus of Nazareth as the promised “Christ” or “Messiah” (lit., the ‘anointed one’) and is by definition “a follower of Christ.” *Vine’s Expository Dictionary* states: “*christianos*—a word formed after the Roman style, signifying *an adherent of Jesus*.” According to another source, Christians are defined as “*those who belong to, or are devoted to Christ*.”¹

The footnote in the *MacArthur Study Bible* says that the name Christian was originally a “term of derision meaning ‘of the party of Christ.’” However, not all commentators (or Bible translators) agree that the name was originally given as a term of derision or contempt. On this point Bible scholar Albert Barnes wrote: “whether the disciples assumed it themselves, or whether it was given by divine intimation, has been a matter of debate. That it was given in derision is not probable, for in the name ‘Christian’ there was nothing dishonorable.”² According to another source: “The word is formed with the Latin suffix which designates ‘follower or partisan of’ (cf. ‘Herodians’ in Mark 3:6). There is no adequate reason to think that the term was used in derision. It simply means people who follow Christ.”³

The first time the name appears in the Bible is in the book of Acts, which reads:

And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called (Gk: *chreematisai*) Christians first in Antioch.⁴

It was observed in one reference work:

The name first given at Antioch to Christ’s followers. In the New Testament it only occurs in 1 Pe. 4:16; Acts 11:26; 26:27-28. Their name among themselves was ‘brethren,’ ‘disciples,’ ‘those of the way’ (Acts 6:1,3; 9:2), ‘saints’ (Rom 1:7). The Jews, as they denied that Jesus is the Christ, would never originate the name ‘Christians,’ but called them ‘Nazarenes’ (Acts 24:5). The Gentiles confounded

¹ *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Volume I, p. 925 (emphasis added).

² *Notes on the New Testament, Explanatory and Practical*, by Albert Barnes, Edited by Robert Frew D.D., Acts (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967), p. 185.

³ *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), p. 1144.

⁴ Acts 11:26, *King James Version*

them with the Jews, and thought them to be a Jewish sect. But a new epoch arose in the church's development when, at Antioch, *idolatrous* Gentiles...were converted. Then the Gentiles needed a new name to designate people who were Jews, neither by birth nor religion. And the people of Antioch were famous for their readiness in giving names: Partisans of Christ, Christiani, as Caesariani, partisans of Caesar; a Latin name, as Antioch had become a Latin city. But the name ['Christian'] was *divinely ordered* (as *chrematizo* always expresses, 11: 26)."⁵

The standard lexical definition for *chrematizo* is "a divine response or revelation: 'answer of God,' 'to utter an oracle, i.e. divinely intimate; by implication, to constitute a firm for business, i.e. (generally) bear as a title: KJV—be called, be admonished (warned) of God, reveal, speak."⁶ According to another source, the word signifies: "to give a response to those consulting an oracle, to give a divine command or admonition, to teach from heaven, 'to be divinely commanded, admonished, instructed,' 'to be the mouthpiece of divine revelations, to promulgate the commands of God,' 'to assume or take to oneself a name from one's public business, to receive a name or title, to be called.'"⁷

The primary lexical meaning of the Greek verb used at Acts 11:26 has led some Bible students to conclude that the name was given to the followers of Christ by divine appointment. In his one-volume commentary, for example, Adam Clarke wrote the following:

It is evident they had the name *Christians* from *Christ* their Master, as the Platonists and Pythagoreans had their name from their masters, Plato and Pythagoras. Now as these had their name from those great masters because they attended their teaching and credited their doctrines, so *the disciples were called Christians because they took Christ for their Teacher*, crediting His doctrines and following the rule of life laid down by Him. It has been a question, By whom was this name given to the disciples? Some think they assumed it; others, that the inhabitants of Antioch gave it to them; and others, that it was given by Saul and Barnabas. The word in our common text which we translate *were called* signifies, in the New Testament, to 'appoint, warn, or nominate,' by divine direction. In this sense the word is used in Matt. ii. 12; Luke ii. 26; and in the preceding chapter of this book, v. 22. If, therefore, the name was given by divine appointment, it is most likely that Saul and Barnabas were directed to give it; and that therefore the name Christian is from God, as well as that grace and holiness which are so essentially required and implied in the character. Before this time the Jewish converts were simply called, among themselves, *disciples*, i.e., *scholars; believers, saints, the church, or assembly*; and by their enemies, *Nazarenes, Galileans, the men of this way or sect*...They considered themselves as one family, and hence the appellation of brethren was frequent among them. A Christian, therefore, is the highest character which any human being can bear upon the earth; and to receive it from God, as those appear to have done—how glorious the title!"⁸

Most Bible versions do not translate Acts 11:26 in a way showing that the name

⁵ *Fausset's Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963), p. 126. It would be more accurate to say, "as *chrematizo* almost always expresses," or "normally expresses" in the New Testament.

⁶ *Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary*. Copyright (c) 1994, Biblesoft and International Bible Translators, Inc.

⁷ *Thayer's Greek Lexicon and Brown Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon*, Copyright (c)1993

⁸ Abridged from the original six-volume work by Ralph Earle, Th.D (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967), p. 987 (underlining added).

“Christian” was given by divine direction. The Greek word *chrematizo* can also simply mean, “to call/name” (without implying divine influence), as it likely does at Romans 7:3: “She shall be called [*chreematisei*] an adulteress.” Being aware of this fact, Albert Barnes observed in his *Notes on the New Testament*: “It cannot be denied, however, that the most usual signification in the New Testament is that of a *divine monition, or communication.*”⁹

For this reason, several modern English translations have rendered Acts 11:26 in the following ways:

The disciples also were *divinely called* first in Antioch Christians.

—*Young’s Literal Translation of the Holy Bible*, 1898

The disciples were *divinely called* ‘Christians’ first at Antioch.

—*McCord’s New Testament Translation of the Everlasting Gospel*

It was first in Antioch that the disciples were by *divine providence* [‘to style divinely,’ *Kingdom Interlinear Translation*] called Christians. —*New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*

In Antioch, God called the followers of Jesus ‘Christians’ for the first time. —*The Simple English Bible New Testament*

In their well-known *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, however, McClintock and Strong suggested that the name was neither given in derision nor by divine appointment:

There is no reason to think with some that the name ‘Christian’ was given in absolute *derision*. When used by Agrippa (Acts xxvi, 28), there is no proof that it was a term of reproach; had he intended derision, he might have employed the term Nazarene...The early adoption of it by Christians themselves, and the manner in which they employ it are sufficient to dispel all idea of this nature (1 Pet. iv, 16). The only reproach connected with the name would be the inevitable one arising from the profession of faith implied in it. Neither is the view of others more probable, that it was a name imposed by divine appointment. The term *chrematizo* (translated ‘called’ in the passage first quoted), usually relied upon to sustain this view, has other significations than that of an oracular response, and is fairly capable of the meaning assigned to it in our version.¹⁰

Whether one is persuaded that the name Christian was given by divine appointment based on the Greek word used at Acts 11:26 (along with the view of certain translators), or believes the name was given in derision,—or given without any reference to derision or divine influence—the following commentary by J. W. McGarvey would seem to adequately summarize the standing of the name as it applies to God’s people, in view of the overall scriptural testimony:

There has been much dispute as to whether this new name was given by Barnabas and Saul under divine authority, or by the Gentiles of Antioch, or by the disciples themselves. It would serve no practical purpose to decide between the latter two suppositions, for, with, whichever party it originated, it was subsequently accepted by the disciples in general...The whole world had heard something of Christ, as the

⁹ The view of Barnes was expressed in his commentary (p. 186) in this way: “I incline to the opinion, however, that it was given to them by the Gentiles who were there, simply as an appellation, without intending it as a name of reproach, and that it was readily assumed by the disciples as a name that would fitly designate them.”

¹⁰ Volume II, p. 269; “our version” is probably a reference to the *King James* (1611) or *Revised Version* (1881).

remarkable personage who was put to death under Pontius Pilate, though many had heard nothing of the early history of his Church. From this fact, when strangers came to Antioch, and heard the new party who were attracting so much attention there, called *Christians*, they at once recognized them as followers of that *Christ* of whom they had already heard. This explains the fact stated in the text, that ‘the disciples were called *Christians first* in Antioch.’ The fact that Luke here adopts it, and that both Paul and Peter afterward recognized it, gives it all the validity of inspired usage, and, therefore, all the weight of divine authority. That it is a New Testament name is undisputed, and this renders its divine authority indisputable.¹¹

In spite of the evidence found in Scripture, it is well known that a considerable number of religious groups and religious leaders—at different times and in the midst of various circumstances—have expressed a degree of dissatisfaction with the simple name ‘Christian.’ They have, for essentially the same reasons, expressed the need for the adoption of a supplemental and distinctive religious label.¹² The following sources represent two very distinct religious groups. Although quite different with regard to their overall interpretation of the Christian faith, both appeal to a very similar line of reasoning with respect to their belief in the *necessity* of taking on a name other than, or in addition to, the one given to the followers of Christ in the holy Scriptures. The well-known Calvinist theologian, R. C. Sproul, after a brief discussion on the background and meaning of the term “evangelical,”¹³ and speaking as an Evangelical/Protestant, made the following argument in his book *Getting the Gospel Right*:

In the religious nomenclature of historic Christianity, however, there have been many who claim the term *Christian* who reject personal rebirth, or who reject the content of the evangel or gospel. *It has been necessary for people to adopt such language to distinguish themselves theologically* from those who claim the term *Christian* for themselves while denying these disputed elements of Christianity...This is why *it is naive in the extreme for people to declare, ‘I am simply a Christian; I won’t use any other labels.’* This ignores two thousand years of the church’s struggle to distinguish heresy from orthodoxy, true Christianity from false forms of or claims to Christian faith.¹⁴

Similarly, in a book written on the history of their religious organization, the writer of a 1993 Watchtower publication, under the subtitle *Need for a Distinctive Name*, made the following comments about the history behind the adoption of the name, “Jehovah’s Witnesses”:

¹¹ McGarvey’s *Original Commentary on Acts*. Garvey also notes: “This name, whether given by divine or human authority, was not designed as an exclusive appellation, seeing that the others were continued in use after its introduction. It merely took its proper place among other names, to answer its own special purpose.”

¹² Some, in fact, are so committed to sectarian interests (or the idea that their denomination or school of theology alone represents the Christian faith) that they even seem to equate or directly associate Christianity and the Gospel itself with their particular religious party: Greek scholar and Baptist, A. T. Robertson, once said: “Give a man an open Bible, an open mind, a conscience in good working order, and he will have a hard time to keep from being a Baptist.” According to the opinion of one Calvinist: “Calvinism is the Gospel and to teach Calvinism is in fact to preach the Gospel.” —Arthur C. Custance, *The Sovereignty of Grace*, p. 302.

¹³ The term *evangelical* means “pertaining to, or characteristic of the gospel.” Technically, an “evangelical” could be or simply mean *one who believes in the evangel or gospel/good news*. The label *evangelical*, however, taken in its narrow and traditional sense, refers to one of many subgroups of Christendom holding to its own set of unique interpretations, post-biblical creeds, extra-biblical dogmas and ecclesiastical traditions. As pointed out by Sproul: “In popular usage *evangelical* signifies a species of the genus *Christian*. Therefore we often hear the term *evangelical Christian*, in which *evangelical* designates a particular kind of Christian...the Reformers called themselves *Evangelicals* to distinguish themselves from Roman Catholics. In this regard the term *Evangelical* functioned as a synonym for *Protestant*.” —*Getting the Gospel Right, The Tie That Binds Evangelicals Together* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), pp. 32, 34.

¹⁴ Sproul, *Getting the Gospel Right*, p. 32 (emphasis added).

In time, it became increasingly evident that in addition to the designation Christian, the congregation of Jehovah's servants *truly did need a distinctive name*. The meaning of the name Christian had become distorted in the public mind because people who claimed to be Christians often had little or no idea who Jesus Christ was, what he taught, and what they should be doing if they really were his true followers...as our brothers progressed in their understanding of God's Word, they clearly saw *the need to be separate from those religious systems that fraudulently claimed to be Christian*...in 1931 we adopted the truly distinctive name Jehovah's Witnesses. Author Chandler W. Sterling refers to this as 'the greatest stroke of genius' on the part of J. F. Rutherford, then president of the Watch Tower Society.¹⁵

In the paragraph that follows, the writer implied that it was more than a "stroke of genius" on the part of the Watch Tower President, and that the selection of the name "Jehovah's Witnesses" was likely the result of "divine providence." Evangelical scholar R. C. Sproul, although not implying that the term *evangelical* was the name chosen by God, seems to suggest that those who would consider themselves to be simply 'Christian' are somehow mistaken and/or not very well informed respecting the two thousand years that have now passed since the time of Christ and his apostles. In his view, there seems to be no room for those who—precisely due to their knowledge of history, the Bible, and the present religious circumstances—choose to identify themselves with none other than that of their head, the Lord Jesus *Christ*. Arguing as an "evangelical," the impression left with the reader is that in order to avoid taking a position that is "naive in the extreme," one must identify with some post-biblical movement and adopt a label such as "evangelical" or "Protestant," and subscribe to the doctrines held to by Dr. Sproul and the brand of "evangelicalism" he advocates.¹⁶ In a similar vein, the Watch Tower seems to suggest that if Christ's followers chose not to take on any other name than the one given in Scripture, that they would somehow be ignoring "divine providence" and be guilty of disregarding the pronouncements given by God through his alleged "sole channel of communication," the Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society.¹⁷

Yet the evidence supports that those who are seeking to follow Christ today are under no obligation to identify themselves as a member of any post-biblical movement, sect or religious denomination. Unfortunately, belonging to, or having formal membership in, any one of such movements often carries with it the implication and expectation that its members adhere to a certain set of doctrinal beliefs unique to that particular group, many of which beliefs developed after the first century and the completion of the inspired Christian Scriptures.

It has been estimated that, today, there are over 20,000 groups, sects, and denominations that would fall under the category of "Christian Religions"¹⁸ (almost all

¹⁵ *Jehovah's Witnesses, Proclaimers of God's Kingdom* (Brooklyn: WTBS, 1993), pp. 150-152 (emphasis added).

¹⁶ In a correspondence F. F. Bruce once observed: "People who adhere to belief in the Bible only (as they believe) often adhere in fact to a traditional school of interpretation of *sola scriptura*. Evangelical Protestants can be as much servants of tradition as Roman Catholics or Greek Orthodox, only they don't realize that it is tradition."—*Focus on the Kingdom Magazine* (correspondence, June 13th, 1981).

¹⁷ Although the writer of the Watchtower publication implies that the selection of the official name "Jehovah's Witnesses" was the result of "divine providence" (something Scripture only applies to the term 'Christian,'—according to Acts 11:26, *NWT*), all that can be proven is that the name adopted was the result of the decision of one man, Judge Rutherford, the President of the Watchtower Society in 1931.

¹⁸ *The World Christian Encyclopedia, Second Edition, A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World* (Oxford University Press, 1981), p. vii. The Editor, David Barrett, noted: "It was expected that the task of compiling this resulting encyclopedia would take about three years; in the event, it has taken twelve years. The reason for this lengthy period was that all those originally involved, including the editor, seriously underestimated the immense size and complexity of the Christian world. The

claiming to base their beliefs on the Bible). Most groups have taken on an *official* and *distinctive* name which normally identifies or pertains to their founder, their claims of authority, their emphasis or priority in doctrine/practice, or their unique interpretations of Scripture that set them apart from other groups. In one way or another, the variety of denominational and sectarian labels that have been adopted, ultimately, contribute to the division that Jesus Christ did not want for his true followers, for he prayed that his disciples would be *one*, just as he and his Father are *one* (John 17:21).¹⁹ In spite of what is sometimes argued, such peculiar denominational labels are unnecessary for Christians and only seem to reflect a partisan spirit that is not authorized or supported by Scripture (1 Corinthians 1:10).

Among the more general names or classifications that are essentially broad in their application include: “(Roman) Catholic,” “Eastern-Greek Orthodox,” “Anglican,” “Protestant,” “Reformed,”²⁰ “(Conservative) Evangelical” (refers to a family of Protestant groups), “Liberal,” “Fundamentalist,” “Pentecostal,” and even “Orthodox.”²¹ Groups that have taken on designations attributing special emphasis to the divine name like “Jehovah’s Witnesses” and the ‘Sacred Name’ movements such as “Yahweh’s New Covenant Assembly (YNCA),” and “Yahweh’s Assembly of Messiah.” Some of the more ‘mainstream’ denominational names include “Presbyterian,” “Episcopalian,” and “Congregationalist”—names that reflect preferred styles of church government. Others identify themselves as “Lutheran,” “Wesleyan,” “Calvinist,”²² “Arminian,” “Amish,” and “Mennonite”—referring to the name of their leader, founder, or most notable upholder of their particular doctrine. Still others have been called or have called themselves, “Apostolic,” “Baptist” (some are even more particular, identifying themselves as ‘*Independent* Baptists,’ ‘*Reformed* Baptists,’ ‘*Particular* Baptists,’ and still others),²³ “Charismatic,” “Christadelphian,” “Christian-Scientist,” “Covenanter,” “Ebionite,” “Four-Square,” “Gnostic,” “Holiness,” “Maronite,” “Methodist,” “Millerite,”

number of denominations was found to be four times as numerous as the estimate made in 1968.” In the same preface Barrett speaks specifically about the “proliferation of 20,800 denominations”.

¹⁹ This does not mean the Scriptures would support a *uniting* of all denominations regardless of belief systems. In many cases, there are very serious and involved differences respecting the doctrine and claims to authority among the various churches. Unity among Christians must be a unity based upon *truth*, the truth of the Gospel as found in the holy Scriptures. The foundational truth that *should* and *does* unite all Christians relates to the true identity of Jesus of Nazareth; this involves, primarily, acceptance of, and faith in, Jesus as the “Christ” or “Messiah,” “the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:13-18; compare 1 John 4:15; 5:1; Ephesians 4:13-14).

²⁰ According to a respected scholar from the “Reformed” tradition: “All Reformed Christians recognize especially John Calvin as their father. But Calvin can be understood in different ways, and, as is the case in any family, his children feel different degrees of dependence upon him...Moreover, there is no one authoritative statement of faith to which all Reformed churches subscribe. There are many different statements. They all bear a common family resemblance, but they differ from each other in emphasis, in the spirit in which they are written, and sometimes in theological content...There is plenty of room in the Reformed family, in other words, for individual differences and freedom of movement...strictly speaking, ‘Reformed’ is a theological, not a denominational, title. It is a mistake to limit it to any one denomination.” —Shirley C. Guthrie, *Christian Doctrine, Revised Edition*, pp. 16, 17.

²¹ One author observed: “The term [Orthodox] itself is a fine one, coming from the Greek words *ortho* and *doxa* meaning simply ‘right teaching’ [or, ‘right opinion’ or ‘right honor’]. Actually, it has come to stand for a set of beliefs that have been defined and established as a result of the various councils held in earlier centuries. Some of those beliefs are simply restatements of Scripture and are obviously ‘right teaching.’ Others are the result of interpretation, argumentation and debate, and have been pronounced ‘orthodox’ by men in authority. As one source puts it, ‘orthodox Christianity is something purely descriptive—referring simply to the majority opinion’” (Dr. Bruce Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, p. 62.). —Franz, *In Search of Christian Freedom*, pp. 704, 705.

²² Some identify themselves (or are identified by others as) “four-point Calvinists,” “moderate Calvinists,” and even, “hyper-Calvinists.”

²³ As far back as 1960 it was observed: “There are nearly three hundred separate denominations in America today, including more than twenty five Baptist groups, some of which continue to fragmentize” (William Adams in his introduction to *Life in the Son* by Robert Shank). In 2002, Charles Kimball, an ordained Baptist minister, wrote: “The number of denominations is mind-boggling. Baptists alone, in the United States today, have more than eighty officially recognized groups. These range in size from the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Protestant denomination in the country, numbering more than sixteen million, to the National Baptist and Progressive National Baptist Conventions to small communions like the Primitive, Free Will, and Seventh-day Baptists.” —*When Religion Becomes Evil*, p. 218 (footnote).

“Moravian,” “Mormon (Latter-Day Saints),” “Nestorian,” “Nazarene,” “Pietist,” “Plymouth Brethren,” “Puritan,” “Quaker,” “Russellite,” “(Seventh-Day) Adventist,” “Socinian,” “(Unitarian) Universalist,” and more...

This is not to suggest that any of the members of certain denominational or non-denominational movements are automatically not Christians, or that there are not persons among them who sincerely endeavor to devote their lives to God and Christ. There are certainly many who *are*, with their whole hearts, trying to follow the Lord while functioning within the framework of the existing institutions. Likewise, there is nothing *inherently* wrong with the majority of denominational names. Most of the denominations *do* adopt their respective names based upon important biblical terms and concepts. For example, the fact that God’s people are commanded to be *baptized* is certainly true and scriptural (*Baptists*). Similarly, the first followers of Christ were admonished to live in expectation of his *arrival* or *advent*²⁴ (*Adventists*). Likewise, Christians are most assuredly called to put their faith in and proclaim the *Evangel* or *Gospel* (*Evangelical*). It might also be said that there is a sense in which all Christians are opposed to and *protestors* of those who would seek to impose false doctrines, fraudulent claims of religious authority, and misrepresentations of the Christian faith (*Protestant*). And, without a doubt, every Christian would *bear witness* and *testify* to the fact that *Jehovah* (YHWH) is the only true God of the Bible and of creation (*Jehovah’s Witnesses*). Yet, when considered in the pure light of the Christian Scriptures, it is clear that none of the above names enjoys explicit apostolic-scriptural approval—and, therefore, divine authorization—as does the name *Christian* (Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16).

When the apostle Paul found that the Christians in Corinth were quarreling among themselves, manifesting a divisive spirit, as they were expressing loyalty and attributing special prominence to certain individuals (including the apostle himself), he said to them: “What I mean is this: One of you says, ‘I follow Paul’;²⁵ another, ‘I follow Apollos’; another, ‘I follow Cephas’; still another, ‘I follow Christ.’ Then, the apostle asked, “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul? I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so no one can say that you were baptized into my name.”²⁶

Similar to our own time, men in the days of the apostle were evidently, in some measure, professing loyalty to entities other than, or in addition to, Christ Jesus. *Christians*, however, cannot ultimately be loyal to or dependent upon any human or group of humans; nor do they need to feel pressured into conforming to the demands of a humanly-contrived religious denomination or ecclesiastical hierarchy. Christians throughout history have known only one Owner and Master, the Lord Jesus Christ; for “he is able [now and always, *TEV*] to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them” (Heb. 7:25, *NIV*). The Lord Jesus *himself* is “the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6), the “one mediator between God and men” (1 Tim. 2:5), and “there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12, *RSV*; compare Eph. 4:1-6).

The name “Christian” is the name given to and adopted by the followers of Christ

²⁴ Also translated, *coming* or *presence* (Gk: *parousia*).

²⁵ Lit., “I am of Paul...I am of Apollos...”

²⁶ 1 Corinthians 1:12-15, *NIV*

in the holy Scriptures, emphasizing that God’s people are devoted and faithful to the true teachings of his Son Jesus, the Christ. This does not mean that everyone who claims to be Christian is truly a disciple of God’s Son; nor does it ignore the fact that religious groups and individuals, throughout history, have gravely misrepresented his true spirit and teachings; and that they will, inevitably, continue to do so in the future. One of the greatest benefits of the name is that it communicates the idea that God’s people are followers and promoters of *Christ*—not an imperfect religious leader, denomination, or one particular segment of the “Christian” religions. And, it must be pointed out, of course, that merely taking on the name, in and of itself, proves nothing.²⁷ Rather, it is the kind of life that one lives that will ultimately demonstrate the reality of one’s profession of the Christian faith (James 3:13, *NRSV*); for the apostle John wrote: “By this we may be sure that we are in [union with, *NAB*] him: he who says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which [Jesus] walked” (1 John 2:5-6, *RSV*). And surely, as the apostle Paul wrote, “God’s firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: ‘*The Lord knows those who are his*’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity’” (2 Timothy, 2:19, *RSV*).

In the time that we live (as the situation was in the first century), we can be sure that God’s people are under no obligation to profess or submit wholesale loyalty to the doctrines, interpretations, creeds, or theological systems devised by religious men—whether they be of, or represented in, Martin Luther, John Calvin, James Arminius, Joseph Smith, the Pope, or the Watchtower Society. God’s people can still be exclusively devoted to the pure, unadulterated message that comes from God *himself* through his Son Jesus *Christ*, and are therefore *Christians*.

Some noteworthy sayings on being a Christian

“Then, the proconsul urging him, and saying, ‘Swear, and I will set thee at liberty, reproach Christ’; Polycarp declared, ‘Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?’ ...And when the proconsul yet again pressed him, and said, ‘Swear by the fortune of Caesar,’ he answered, ‘Since thou art vainly urgent that, as thou sayest, I should swear by the fortune of Caesar, and pretendest not to know who and what I am, hear me declare with boldness, I am a Christian.’” —Polycarp (prior to martyrdom), 2nd century.

“None of these things is hid from you, if ye perfectly possess that faith and love towards Christ Jesus which are the beginning and the end of life. For the beginning is faith, and the end is love. Now these two, being inseparably connected together, are of God, while all other things which are requisite for a holy life follow after them... The tree is made manifest by its fruit; so those that profess themselves to be Christians shall be recognised by their conduct. For there is not now a demand for mere profession, but that a man be found continuing in the power of faith to the end [‘Those that profess themselves to be Christ’s are known not only by what they say, but by what they practice.’, *Longer Version*].” —Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians Chapter XIV. (Exhortations to Faith and Love) *Shorter Version*, 2nd century.

“St. Paul, in 1 Cor. 3, would not allow Christians to call themselves Pauline or Petrine, but Christian. How then should I, poor, foul carcass that I am, come to have men give to the children of Christ a name derived from my worthless name? No, no, my dear friends; let us abolish all party names, and call ourselves

²⁷ A Christian of the early second century is alleged to have written: “It is fitting, then, not only to be called Christians, but to be so in reality. For it is not the being called so, but the being really so, that renders a man blessed... Let us therefore prove ourselves worthy of that name which we have received [‘therefore, having become His disciples, let us learn to live according to the principles of Christianity.’ *Shorter Version*].” —*The Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians, Ante-Nicene Fathers*, pp. 61, 63.

Christians after Him Whose doctrine we have.”—Martin Luther (16th Century)

“The high and mighty of this world have begun to persecute and hate Christ’s teaching under the presence of the name of Luther. They call all of Christ’s teaching ‘Lutheran,’ no matter who on earth proclaims it...This is now my fate. I began to preach the Gospel of Christ in 1516, long before anyone in our region had ever heard of Luther...At any rate, Luther did not teach me anything...The papists none of the less burden me and others maliciously with such names and say, ‘You be a Lutheran, for you preach the way Luther writes.’ I answer them, ‘I preach the way Paul writes. Why do you not also call me a follower of Paul? Indeed, I proclaim the word of Christ. Why do you not call me a Christian?’” —Huldrych Zwingli (16th century), quoted in De Lamar Jensen, *Reformation Europe, Age of Reform and Revolution*, p. 102.

“Would God that all party names and unscriptural phrases and forms which have divided the Christian world were forgotten, and that we, as humble, loving disciples, might sit down at the Master’s feet, read His Holy Word, imbibe His Spirit and transcribe His life into our own...With regard to the name Christian, I would say, there is none like it; give it to me, and in life and in death I would glorify God in this name.” —John Wesley (1703-1791), Quoted in C. C. Crawford, *Sermon Outlines on the Restoration Plea*, 2nd ed., p. 47

“Whosoever will list himself under the banner of Christ, must, in the first place, and above all things, make war upon his own lusts and vices. It is in vain for any man to usurp the name of Christian, without holiness of life, purity of manners, and benignity and meekness of spirit...If the Gospel and the apostles may be credited, no man can be a Christian without charity, and without that faith which works, not by force, but by love.” —John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689), p. 13, 14.

“Since you would know by what name I would be distinguished from others, I tell you I would be, and hope I am, a Christian; and choose, if God should count me worthy, to be called a Christian, a believer, or other such name which is approved by the Holy Ghost. And as for those factious (or sect) titles of Anabaptist, Presbyterian, Independent, and the like, I conclude that they came neither from Antioch nor from Jerusalem, but from Hell and Babylon, for they tend to divisions; you may know them by their fruits.” —John Bunyan, *Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678)

“It is, however, an honored name—the most honorable appellation that can be conferred on a mortal. It suggests at once to a Christian the name of his great Redeemer; the idea of our intimate relation to him; and the thought that we receive him as our chosen leader, the source of our blessings, the author of our salvation, the fountain of all our joys. It is the distinguishing name of all the redeemed. It is not that we belong to this or that denomination...it is not that they stand high in courts, and among the frivolous, the fashionable, and the rich, that true honor is conferred upon men. These are not the things that give distinction and speciality to the followers of the Redeemer. It is that they are ‘Christians.’ This is their special name; by this they are known; this at once suggests their character, their feelings, their doctrines, their hopes, their joys. This binds them all together—a name which rises above every other appellation; which unites in one the inhabitants of distant nations and tribes of men; which connects the extremes of society, and places them in most important respects on a common level; and which is a bond to unite in one family all those who love the Lord Jesus, though dwelling in different climes, speaking different languages, engaged in different pursuits in life, and occupying distant graves at death. He who lives according to the import of this name is the most blessed and eminent of mortals.” —Albert Barnes (1798-1870), *Barnes Notes on the New Testament*, Commentary on Acts 11:26

“To be a Christian is precisely the same thing as to be a Disciple of Jesus Christ. A Disciple, to speak in general terms, is one who acknowledges any one as his teacher, and faithfully follows his instructions...To be a disciple of Jesus Christ two things are necessary: to receive him as an Instructor, and to obey him as a Master. (1.) To receive Christ as a teacher, to regard him as the instructor of our souls, at whose feet we are ready to sit as humble docile pupils, and receive without question whatever he may communicate respecting God, and his character, and divine purposes. He that is thus eager and willing to learn of Jesus as God’s appointed Teacher, or which is the same thing, to take his religion from the New Testament, is so far a Christian. And he has perfect claim to the title, when (2.) he carries into practical effect those instructions, and faithfully conforms himself to them in heart, disposition, and conduct. This faith and confidence in him as a divine Teacher and obedience to him as a Saviour, constitute a Christian. Some, however, will step in here, and tell us that this is not sufficient. They will name a certain list of doctrines, which it is necessary to

believe that Jesus taught, and declare that no one is a Christian, who does not hold a certain specified form and number of religious articles.—To such I answer, who told you so? Who has given you a right to say, that there is only one sect in all Christendom which contains true disciples? For in fact the assertion amounts to this:—just as if it were not more pleasing to our Lord, that one should come to him and learn of him with right dispositions and faithful endeavors, than that he should simply attain a correct set of abstract opinions. There is not a passage in the New Testament, which requires a completely unerring faith, before one can be numbered with the disciples of Christ. I can point to a multitude of passages which require a life without error; but I do not remember one which requires a faith without error.—On the contrary, I recollect we are told ‘to receive the weak in faith,’ and, what is more, to receive them without ‘doubtful disputations’ (Rom. 14:1). I recollect too, that while the twelve were always acknowledged by their living Master as his disciples, they had many great errors of faith, even in respect to the nature of his kingdom. But then they were humble, sincere, diligent, learners,—they listened to him and followed him, and placed all their confidence in him; and therefore, notwithstanding their errors, they were received by him.—It is plain, therefore, that no man is to be refused the Christian name solely on account of the supposed imperfection of his faith. They that have drawn up their articles, and declare that all who do not conform to them are not Christians, are trying men by a wrong standard,—a standard, which their Master himself, by his conduct to his disciples, has discountenanced. ...I have stated these two cases strongly, because it is easiest thus to test the principle. Upon such cases, and they are by no means imaginary, there can be no difference of opinion; and they prove, that it is perfectly absurd to pretend that any certain set of opinions, beyond an acknowledgment of the divine authority of Jesus Christ and his gospel, is essential to a Christian, or constitutes a Christian. They prove to us further,—that he is a genuine Disciple, who, having patiently and humbly learned of Jesus whatever he teaches, and cast himself on his gospel for salvation, faithfully cultivates his spirit, and forms his character according to that teaching and his example. This is a definition which cannot be set aside. This will hold good amidst all the opposition of zeal and bigotry. This, in all practical decisions ever has been and ever must be appealed to, by the sober common sense and unanimous judgment of the whole Christian world. ...How important, then, is it for us to avoid the error of making our private opinions the standard by which to judge the claims of our fellow men. It is not the right standard by which to try ourselves; much less by which to try others. We cannot go beyond their general characters; and if their characters, under a charitable construction, are agreeable to the upright and devout spirit of the gospel, it is to the last degree arrogant and criminal in us to deny them the Christian name. We may think their opinions erroneous, and say so, if we please; but to denounce them as not Christians, because it is our opinion that their opinions are erroneous—words cannot express the absurdity.” —Henry Ware (1764–1845)

“It will be seen, therefore, that while we claim to be Christians only, we do not claim to be the only Christians. Our principles will not allow us to be anything else; and we strive to have others satisfied with being the same. Hence the charge so often made, that we arrogate to ourselves alone the name Christian, is false. We simply decline to be more than this, because God’s people in the New Testament times were nothing more. To those who love the simplicity of apostolic Christianity this position will commend itself with great force.” —F. G. Allen, “Our Strength and Our Weakness,” in *New Testament Christianity*, Vol. 2, ed., p. 245 (1926)

“My brethren are Christians only. They have joined nothing of any kind. They have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ and in Him they worship God and serve their fellows. In this position they are entirely free from any responsibility for the divisions that exist. There is no denominational wall around us. All Christians on earth, all who have believed and obeyed Christ, are our brethren...We are separated from all denominational believers by the walls which *they* have erected about themselves. They are separated from each other by these same walls. Our plea is for these walls to come down, for all who believe in Christ to be left free under God in their local congregations to study, understand and practice the word of God, without the intervention of denominational authority or consideration for denominational creeds or confessions.” —Jesse P. Sewall, “Undenominational Christianity,” *Abilene Christian College Lectures of 1922-23* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian College, 1923), p. 140. Emphasis added.

“The name ‘Christian’ is a name broad enough and great enough to include every being in the wide, wide world who accepts and obeys the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ...Simply because one is obedient to Christ and wears the name ‘Christian’ is no indication that he feels he has a copyright on that name. I would to God that every man who is a Christian would wear that name and no other to indicate his religion. One

child of God does not need to be distinguished or separated from another child of God. God's children should be one in purpose, one in spirit, and one in life. They are not to be divided and contending over names as did the church at Corinth. Such division produced carnality, and carnality leads to death. I would like to be helpful in bringing all Christians to the point that they are willing to lose sight of human names and wear simply the name of Christ." —J. C. McQuiddy, "The Name 'Christian'," *Gospel Advocate* (Oct. 14, 1920): 1003-1004

"I have never been so egotistic to say that my brethren with whom I commune on the first day of the week are the *only* Christians on this earth. I never said that in my life. I do make the claim that we are Christians *only*. But there is a vast difference between that expression and the one formerly made. But you ask what my objective is...I am trying to get all of God's people everywhere to stand together as a solid phalanx against the opposing forces now working to destroy the church of our Lord. I know that the cause of Christ needs its full strength. I know that in unity alone strength can exist, and I think it a calamity for those who claim to believe the Bible, to reverence Jehovah, and to wear the name of Christ at all, to stand thus divided, and thereby invite the enemy to a victory over our scattered forces." —N. B. Hardeman, *Hardeman's Tabernacle Sermons*, Vol. 3 (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1928), p. 125

"We are strictly unsectarian, and consequently recognize no sectarian name, believing with Paul, (read 1 Cor. 3:1-4) that where one saith I am of Paul, and I am of Apollos, or I am a Baptist, or I am a Methodist, etc., it is an evidence of *carnality*, and consequently in opposition to the Spirit of Christ. Did Paul or Apollos die for us? If so, let us call ourselves theirs. Were we baptized into the Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, or other denominational churches? If so, we *are* members of it, and should be properly recognized by those names. But if we were baptized into the one body or church of which Jesus is the one and only Head, then we are *members* in particular of his body, and the only appropriate name would be his; Scripturally called 'Church of Christ,' 'Christians,' 'Church of the first born,' and such general names...We have no creed (fence) to bind us together or to keep others out of our company. The Bible is our only standard, and its teachings our only creed...We are in fellowship with all Christians in whom we can recognize the Spirit of Christ, and especially with those who recognize the Bible as their only standard. We do not require, therefore, that all shall see, just as we do in order to be called Christians; realizing that growth in both grace and knowledge is a gradual process...If all Christians were to thus free themselves of prescribed creeds, and study the Word of God without denominational bias, truth and knowledge and real Christian fellowship and unity, would result. The Spirit of the Head would pervade the unfettered members of the body, and sectarian pride would vanish...We always refuse to be called by any other name than that of our Head—Christians—continually claiming that there can be no division among those continually lead by his Spirit and example as made known through his Word." —Charles Russell (1882)

"More and more sensitive persons are coming to the conclusion that something is wrong with the entrenched and divided state of people who claim to follow the same Lord and profess the same hope of eternal life in him...We have come to the point where practically everyone who professes Christianity has to have another 'label' for identification purposes. In the contexts of our religious division, each of us feels compelled to tag himself with an identifying term in addition to *Christian* in order to be specific about the people he or she claims as a spiritual fellowship...Yet practically everyone will agree that the original, first-century followers of Jesus of Nazareth were simply and only *Christians*...All denominational bodies maintain their identities by means of divisive creeds, human names, particular organizational structures, and the like. All of them appeal to the Bible—but the appeal is to the Bible *plus* some additional confession, approved interpretation, or clergy-prepared catechism. It is not Scripture that keeps the members of these various denominations apart from other believers. It is human formulations of faith in addition to the Bible which divide and separate...By giving up human names, human creeds, and human institutions, one can embrace a simpler faith which requires nothing as a test of fellowship except those things in Scripture which relate to Christ and eternal life in him. Christ is the only creed; Scripture is the only standard for faith and practice; and no human being or clergy council can sit in judgment on one's personal faith...It is possible, then, for people to be Christians, *just Christians*, and to experience corporate life in local assemblies which are *churches* in the New Testament sense of that term. If you doubt that such a thing could happen, you have forgotten the first several pages of the book of Acts. It is exactly how the church in the first century began. Individuals responded to the preaching of the gospel of Christ and were baptized in the name of Jesus. They met in small groups—what we would call 'house churches' (cf. Rom. 16:4-5; Phile. 2) or small local assemblies—first in Jerusalem, then in Samaria and Antioch, Corinth and

Ephesus... Surely the appreciation I feel for Luther, Wesley, and Cambell is something like that I felt for Apollos, Paul, and Cephas by Christians at Corinth. But God forbid that we form societies of 'Lutherans,' 'Wesleyans,' or 'Cambellites'! Instead, let us learn whatever we can from these—or any other godly persons—which can point us to Christ. Then let us wear Christ's name, proclaim the gospel to the lost, worship as the first-century church did, and serve our fellow human beings in the spirit of compassion our Lord demonstrated among men. Doing so will produce unity in Christ; failing to do so will perpetuate the divisions already in existence... There are sincere, knowledgeable, and devout Christians scattered among the various denominations. Yet they are separated from one another by creedal formulations, human names, and cumbersome organizational structures which have found their way into the stream of human history since the time of Christ and the apostles. Let such divisions end. Let's just be *Christians only* and stand together in shared devotion to our Savior and mutual submission to his authoritative will." —*I Just Want to Be a Christian*, by Rubel Shelly (1984, 1986), pp.11, 27, 13, 17, 158

"The concerted attempt of the Calvinistic Baptists to equate Calvinism with Baptist Orthodoxy is not shared by their Presbyterian and Reformed 'cousins.' These two groups are basically the same in doctrine: the term *Reformed* emphasizing the doctrines of the Reformation and the term *Presbyterian* emphasizing their form of church government... So Calvinism is to be equated with Reformed theology—not just by mere acquiescence, but being a fully cognate term. The aforementioned D. James Kennedy relates why he is a Presbyterian: 'I am a Presbyterian because I believe that Presbyterianism is the purest form of Calvinism.' ... One cannot be a Presbyterian or Reformed without being a Calvinist, but one certainly can be a Baptist. A Calvinistic Baptist should be a misnomer, because, in the words of the Dutch Reformed Herman Hanko: 'A Baptist is only inconsistently a Calvinist'... beginning in the time of Edward, there arose a party in England who desired a more complete reformation, although it was not till later that they acquired the name *Puritans*... The label *Arminian* was now used by Puritans to impugn those who rejected Calvinism. Arminianism (opposition to Calvinism) was termed Pelagianism. But as usual, some did not go along with the contrived Calvinist-Arminian debate... Richard Montagu (1577-1641) asserted that 'he was neither an Arminian, nor a Calvinist, nor a Lutheran, but a Christian.'" —Vance, *The Other Side of Calvinism*, pp. 26-28; 169

"I am convinced that any theology and any council—however much it is to be understood in terms of its time and the time preceding it—must, insofar as it claims to be Christian, ultimately be judged by the criterion of what is Christian. And the criterion of what is Christian—also according to the view of the councils and popes—is the original Christian message, the gospel, indeed the original figure of Christianity: the concrete, historical Jesus of Nazareth, who for Christians is the Messiah..." —Hans Küng, *The Catholic Church, A Short History*, p. 23

"...we find no admonition in the Greek Scriptures to identify and join the right 'association.' Why? Because early Christians were disciples or followers of a *person*! Each individual who became a Christian took on the responsibility to follow Jesus' teachings, not just to find and join the 'right organization.' Their discipleship of and relationship with Jesus was defined by changed attitudes and behavior, not membership in a particular group... *The first Christians focused their attention on following Jesus, living in a way that showed that they were submitting to God and that they appreciated what God had done for them through Jesus* instead of organizational structure, tradition, external rites, unique interpretations or novel explanations of Scripture passages... [The early Christians did not] focus their attention on the Father apart from his official representative, Jesus Christ. Since Jesus represented his Father perfectly, and was given all authority in heaven and earth, their focus on Jesus in no way detracted from his Father, for it was the Father's will that all honor the Son just as they honor the Father: 'He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.' (John 5:23) Jesus had told them that they would be *his* witnesses to the most distant part of the earth. (Acts 1:8) *That is why Jesus' followers were called Christians.* They were his servants, for Jesus said: 'My Father will honor the one who serves me.' —John 12:26... The Scriptures clearly teach that those who truly follow Jesus can be identified primarily by their godly behavior. This is not merely an appearance of godly acts driven by selfishness or the desire for personal prominence, but the genuine article, motivated by deep love for God, which results in obedience to his commands. These true Christians are where you find them. Jesus has been and will continue to be absolutely, completely successful in finding all of his sheep. Each one hears his voice, and he will not lose even one of them. (Jn 6:39; 10:14)" —Tom Cabeen, *Where is the Body of Christ?*

[Christ's] call is, 'Come to **me**.' not come to an organization or to a church or denomination. (Matthew 11:28)...Because of the traditional mentality that has been perpetuated over the centuries, many are not able to grant full acceptance to another person who is not identified as approved by their particular group standard. Therefore, their aim will always be to have others become members of their movement—denominational or non-denominational. Sadly, this sectarian spirit makes it difficult for them to accept as children of God persons who do not belong to their movement and often confines them to association that narrows their love and stunts their spiritual growth...Whatever form a sectarian spirit may take, it is spiritually detrimental and is one that all seeking to be loyal disciples of Jesus Christ must resist...Many people do rise above the extreme manifestation of the sectarian spirit but are still negatively impacted by theological views that developed after the first century. A conditioned doctrinal orientation may interfere with their being able to develop a heartfelt appreciation of Christ's role in leading them to the Father. (1 Peter 3:18)...A proper recognition of who we are can prevent elevating any individual or group of individuals, attributing to them the kind of teaching authority that belongs exclusively to Jesus Christ. No human has the right to claim preeminence, for Christ alone is 'the firstborn among many brothers.' (Romans 8:29, *NIV*)...Individually, we are fellow brothers, listening to our senior brother's teaching. While some of us may grasp his instruction a little better and, in turn, may be able to teach fellow believers by calling to their attention what he taught, we remain fellow learners. Any fellowship among members of the family of God's children should harmonize with Jesus' words: 'You are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you will be your servant.'" —Matthew 23:8-12, *NIV*." (From the essays "What Can I do?" and "The Importance of Having a Personal Relationship with God and His Son" by Commentary Press)

"That not all who subsequently took the name 'Christian' truly were such is evident. Christ Jesus warned of apostasy in his parable of the wheat and the weeds. The apostle Paul, who was known as a 'Christian,' echoed that warning in his writings. In the Revelation, the apostle John laid bare the impure adulterated state already existing in some congregations in his day. It was clearly recognized that there would be false Christians, many of them. But neither Paul nor John nor any of the Bible writers indicated that a change of name would in any way remedy the situation. It was not by the adoption of some different name, a new label as it were, but by means of a *life course* that exemplified genuine Christianity and by means of *adherence to truth* as found in the teachings of God's Son and his apostles and disciples that the only meaningful distinction could be made. When the angels of God carry out the final part of the parabolic picture in effecting the harvest of the wheat from the weeds, labels in the form of denominational names surely will play no part...God's Son gave the assurance that he would have true followers, not just in the first century or in this twentieth century, but in all the centuries in between, for he said, 'I am with you *always, to the close of the age*.' Intermixed though they were among all the 'weeds' that were bound to come, he would know who these genuine disciples were, *not* because they belonged to some organization but because of what they *were*, as *persons*. Wherever they were, however indistinguishable from the human standpoint their being part of his congregation may have been, down through the centuries he has known them, not only collectively but *individually*, and led them as their Head, their Master...God's Word shows that it is not up to men—not even possible for men—to separate people out so as to say that they have now gathered all the 'wheat' into one neat enclosure. The Scriptures make clear that only when God's Son makes known his judgments will that identification become manifest." —Franz, *In Search of Christian Freedom*, pp. 491-492

"[Prior to disaffiliating from near life-long membership in one religious organization] The question is asked, Where then do I go? What do I become? I feel no need to 'go' anywhere. For I know the One who has the 'sayings of everlasting life.' (John 6:68) I appreciate the strengthening companionship of those I have with whom to associate (either personally or by correspondence) and hope that the future will add to my acquaintance with yet other sincere persons whose concern is for truth, not simply in doctrine, in words, but as a way of life. (1John 3:18)...I am simply trying, then, to be a Christian, a disciple of God's Son. I cannot see why anyone would want to be anything else. I cannot understand how anyone could hope to be anything more." —Franz, *Crisis of Conscience*, p. 406

"The name *Christian* embodies within itself, in a more generic form, all the obligations specifically expressed by the other names ['saint,' 'disciple,' 'brother,' 'child of God']. Being derived from the name of him who is 'head over all things for the Church,' whose name is above every name, it is a title of peculiar

honor and glory. It calls upon the man who wears it to act a part in consonance with the historic memories which cluster around it, and encourages him with the reflection that he wears a high dignity even when despised and spit upon by the powers of earth. So thought Peter, when this name was most despised...Not to multiply words upon this point, it is sufficiently evident, from the above considerations, that parties and party names among Christians should be obliterated. If we say that it is *impossible* to obliterate them, we are simply saying that it is impossible to bring Christians back to the New Testament model—for, in the New Testament period, there were no such divisions, and therefore a restoration of that state of the Church would be the destruction of parties and party names. If this is impossible, it can only be from one cause, and that is, that men professing to take the word of God as their guide are so hypocritical in this profession, that they will, at all hazard, persevere in despising its authority in reference to a prominent item of duty. How shameful it is, that men will uphold parties and party names, which they know perfectly that a strict conformity to the New Testament would utterly destroy!...Those who love God must break loose at once, as individuals, from the bondage of party, and take a position where they may be upholders of no party, and wearers of no party name. All who act thus will find themselves planted together on the plain letter of the Scriptures, as their only rule of faith and practice.”—McGarvey’s *Commentary on Acts*

“If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or a thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.”

—1 Peter 4:14-16, *New International Version*