

For Our Information

Joyce Venable is back in the hospital with stomach issues.

Betty Ragsdale has an appointment this week to talk with her surgeon.

Jon Ross Simpson obeyed the Gospel call last Tuesday evening in baptism.

The Simpson Family is out of town this weekend.

Storms, travel, sickness and surgeries means prayer is needed for all.

Pray to God for courage & strength

Contact Us

We want opportunities to speak with others about our work in the Lord's Kingdom.

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We seek only to serve God according to His Will!

in obedience to Christ; and through it, one's sins are forgiven (**Acts 2:38**), and he becomes a new creature in Christ (**Romans 6:4; 2Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 3:16-17**).

If one's spiritual vocabulary is firmly grounded in the Word of God, then he is able to converse understandingly with others who share that same language on such subjects as sanctification, redemption, the kingdom of Christ, the grace of God, obedience unto salvation, the one true church, elders and deacons, Bible authority, being a Christian, fellowship in Christ, Biblical unity, and the second coming of Christ. It is a sad situation that in our own nation we cannot communicate effectively with many of our friends and neighbors about spiritual things because we don't speak the same language that they speak regarding our relationship with God and our duty toward Him. Isn't that strange when we claim to be using the same book written in the same language! There is one solution!

---- Gilbert Alexander

Seeking His Righteousness

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Church Autonomy

Robert Turner

"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



shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

1Peter 5:2



Meet With Us

Worship Services

Sunday 10:20 am & 5:00 pm

Bible Classes

Sunday 9:30 AM

Wednesday 7:00 PM

1512 Tanner St. Malvern, AR

TannerSt.com

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' 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

Store In My Heart

Song of Songs 1:1

The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.

Though the title in our Bible is drawn from this first verse, it does not really tell us much about the book. Some think this verse simply indicates the song is dedicated to Solomon or was written about him.

Shortly after you begin reading the main idea of this book will be evident. It is a collection of love poems celebrating the relationship between a husband and wife. There is a sexual tone to some of the language and such is appropriate in a marriage relationship.

Some see this as an illustration of the love between Christ and his church. While this is possible, I suppose, I feel it is best to take it as it seems and use it to help our own marriage relationship.

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.

Spiritual Language

To understand each other in religion as in secular affairs, people must speak the same language. Word usage and particular meaning of terms must be common to a single standard. The Word of God is that standard in religion. Confusion is inevitable when this principle is ignored. For example, when baptism means immersion to one person, a light sprinkling of water to another, and a pouring of water on a small portion of the body to someone else, then to announce that a person has been baptized is to make an ambiguous announcement. However, when baptism is recognized to be immersion by the teaching of the Scriptures, then the announcement of one's baptism is a clear and definite declaration (**Acts 8:37; Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:12**). Scriptural baptism in keeping with the commission Jesus gave (**Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16**) is an act of faith,