



The Reflector

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The Christian Age

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Someone coined the expression, “the Old Testament is the New Testament concealed and the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed,” a long time ago. It is a good and true saying. The story of man and his relationship to God and vice versa begins in the opening pages of the Old Testament and quickly turns into a story of man falling out of fellowship with God due to sin and of God’s plan to reestablish that fellowship through the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15). The story of the redemptive plan intensifies with the call of Abraham (Genesis 12). God gave Abraham a three-fold promise concerning his seed. Two parts of the promise was physical while the third was spiritual. Through his seed there was to be (1) a great nation (Israel) formed to be God’s own nation, who would receive (2) a great land (Canaan), both of which were fulfilled according to the Old Testament revelation. Then there was the third promise which was spiritual in nature – that through his seed all nations would be blessed. The great nation is formed in Egypt and brought out and received a covenant with laws through Moses, God’s chosen deliverer and lawgiver, that was to last until the ultimate Deliverer (Christ) would come to make a New Covenant that would include all nations (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:6-13; Isaiah 2:2).

The laws given to Israel under the first covenant were physical “shadows” or “types” of the spiritual things to characterize the New Covenant under Christ when the redeemed of all nations would compose God’s spiritual nation under the rule of the Messiah. Also, during this time prophets were called to bring Israel back to God when she strayed and to look into the future when

there would be a new and better day for the people of God. The ultimate and eternal purpose of God to offer redemption for all nations and to bring them all into one fold under Christ was somewhat shrouded in mystery until the fulfillment of types and prophecies in Christ. Thus, New Testament writers referred to the gospel as the revelation of “the mystery” – the gospel lifted the veil so that it can be clearly seen what God had in mind all along throughout the history of the world. Now that we have that revelation in Christ we can look at the types and the revealed antitypes or at the Messianic prophecies and their fulfillment and say, “That is it. That is what was meant by all those Old Testament references. It is no longer a mystery.” God’s physical nation, with its physical ordinances and material house was a foreshadow of God’s ultimate spiritual nation (kingdom or church) that would never be destroyed.

When Jesus met the woman at the well in Samaria, she wanted to know where was the correct place to worship. Was it the house in Jerusalem or the house in the mountain of Samaria? (John 4). Jesus assures her that time was near when the place would not matter. Why? Because “God is spirit” and that worship would be “in spirit and in truth.” “In spirit” is the opposite of physical or fleshy. The new worship would be spiritually oriented rather than physically oriented as it had been in Israel under the law. So, Jerusalem and the mountain of Samaria or any other geographical location would be immaterial – all items of spiritual worship can be done anywhere.

Now that we have the mystery revealed,

we know that all those many animal sacrifices were foreshadowing the spiritual sacrifices in God's new nation made up of all from every nation that have submitted themselves to the rule of Christ. The blood of the fleshly sacrifices were types of the blood of Christ that was to be shed for the sin of the world. The blood of bulls and goats offered for sin was a shadow of the Christ who became a sin offering once for all for all people (Hebrews 10:1-18; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

In addition to this, those who have been cleansed by His blood spend their lives offering up spiritual sacrifices to God through Christ, our high priest, rather than all those physical sacrifices (blood and grain) commanded of Israel to school them for the coming redeemer when they and all other nations would be under a new order. (Cf. Galatians 3:24-25).

So now, instead of those sacrifices, Christians, as beneficiaries of the great sacrifice of Jesus, offer spiritual sacrifices (1 Peter 2:5; Hebrews 13:15; Philippians 2:17; Romans 12:1-2). No more material sacrifices of animals or grain, but spiritual sacrifices pleasing to God. No more under the law that provided for such material/fleshly sacrifices but a new and better covenant. No citizens of a kingdom with geographical territories, but a kingdom located in the hearts of its citizens (Luke 17:21).

Peter vividly compares the Christian age with the past age in 1 Peter 2:

1. Christians are living stones in God's house (v. 5), the former house was made up of lifeless stones.
2. Christians are God's holy/royal priesthood (vv. 5, 9), the former priests were fleshly descendants of Levi.
3. Christians offers up spiritual sacrifices (v. 5), the former sacrifices were material /fleshly in nature.
4. Christians now make up God's holy nation, His special people (v. 9), just as the Israelites had been in the past (Deuteronomy 7:6). Only this is a spiritual nation.

Citizens enter God's holy nation today by a new birth (John 3:1-5; 1 Peter 1:23), instead of by

physical birth as was the case in Israel. People now become children of God by faith when they are baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:26, 27) rather than becoming children of God the way they did under the old dispensation. Hence, we are justified by an obedient faith in the spiritual promise made to Abraham that in him all nations would be blessed. So, in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile but all are one who have been baptized into Christ and as such are the real seed of Abraham and heirs according to the promise made to him that in him all the families/nations of the earth would be blessed. Abraham, himself, had been justified by his obedient faith (in the promise) even before the law was given, so we without the law are justified by our obedient faith in the same promise after the law was taken away by the cross of Christ. (Galatians 3:26-29).

How great it is to stand of this side of the cross of Christ and look back at Old Testament history and see the veil lifted, making God's eternal mystery completely known to us by the apostolic preaching, recorded in the pages of the New Testament. (See Ephesians 3:1-5). What a majestic plan! It is now clear who the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 is, or what Psalm 22 is all about along with other prophecies made to Israel about a coming kingdom ushering in a better day. We now have the benefit of the Lord's church to make known to us the manifold wisdom of God that had been at work from the beginning and beyond in the mind of God (Ephesians 3:9,10). ■

Must Women "Keep Silence in the Church"?

Wayne Jackson

(Editor's Note: Wayne Jackson is a rather conservative voice among institutional churches. While we would likely disagree on several matters we both would consider important, we think that his take on this subject is right on target.)

Bible Question: The term "silence" in 1 Corinthians 14:34 is often misunderstood and misapplied. Must a woman keep "silent" in the church?

Bible Answer: A number of years ago, a faction arose within the church which argued that it is sinful for women to teach the Bible to children in the class arrangement when the church comes

together. This practice, they alleged, violates Paul's instruction for women to "keep silence" in the churches (1 Cor. 14:34).

Some of our old debaters responded to this argument in this fashion. They contended that the Greek word *sigao* ("keep silence") demanded absolute silence – not a sound. Since such a prohibition would be inconsistent with injunctions regarding regular meetings of the church, e.g., singing, they reasoned that 1 Corinthians 14:34 did not pertain to normal church meetings, hence, this context must not be applicable in our time. By such reasoning they felt they avoided a conflict with 1 Corinthians 14:34.

Some today are making this same argument – but with a different purpose. They want an expanded role for the woman in the assembly. But they, likewise, see 1 Corinthians 14:34 as an obstacle; hence, the context is again dismissed as irrelevant. The argument was unsound in the past (regardless of the respectable names associated with it) and it is equally erroneous today.

The entire case hinges upon the meaning of the Greek verb *sigao*. This word never did demand an absolute, unqualified silence. Rather, the nature of the silence is determined by the context. The verb *sigao* is found infrequently in the Bible – some 19 times in the Greek Old Testament, and less than a dozen times in the New Testament. A careful examination of the term reveals that the context identifies the nature of the "silence" under consideration. For instance, when the Israelites, pursued by the Egyptians, arrived at the Red Sea, they were terrified; they complained of their plight to Moses. He told them that Jehovah would fight for them; they thus were to "hold [their] peace," i.e., be silent (Ex. 14:14). That obviously did not mean that they were forbidden to speak at all; rather, they were to cease their faithless whimpering.

When David described certain hardships – as he "kept silence" (Psa. 32:3) – he was not speaking of general silence, but silence regarding his sin. After the disciples witnessed the transfiguration scene, they "held their peace," i.e., remained silent (Lk. 9:36). That does not mean they did not talk at all. Rather, they did not discuss with others what

they had seen on the mountain.

Now to 1 Corinthians 14. The verb *sigao* is used three times in this chapter.

One who has the gift of tongues is to keep silence if he has no interpreter to use with his alien audience (:28). If a brother is speaking, and another receives a more current revelation, the former is to keep silence (:30). Finally, women are to keep silence (:34).

The first two prohibitions demand silence only in the matters being discussed. They do not forbid these men to otherwise speak consistent with their divine obligations.

The final command of silence does not demand that a woman be absolutely silent at church. Rather, in harmony with what the apostle taught elsewhere (1 Tim. 2:12), the woman is not to speak or teach in any way that violates her gender role. She is not to occupy the position of a public teacher in such a capacity as to stand before the church and function as the teacher (or co-teacher) of the group. In assuming this official capacity, she has stepped beyond her authorized sphere, and she violates scripture.

Thus, mark "silence" in :34. Draw arrows back to verses 28, 30, and note: Silence not absolute, but qualified by context. ■

Why "Liberal" and "Conservative" Churches of Christ?

Robert Harkrider

During the past three decades many have asked this question. Some sincere brethren who have been caught up in one stream or another never fully understood, and many who were too young before have now grown to adulthood wondering why. It is therefore a good question worthy of repeated investigation. Labels of "liberal" and "institutional" versus "anti" and "conservative" have been used by some as a prejudicial tool to halt further investigation. Labels used as prejudicial clubs are to be condemned; yet the terms "liberal" and "conservative" are proper when used as adjectives to describe a difference in attitude toward Bible authority, and consequently, a difference in practices. As the years go by, the attitude underlying the division becomes more

apparent. We are not separated because one group believes in benevolence and the other does not, nor because of jealousy and envy. We have divided over a basic attitude toward the Bible. A liberal attitude justifies any activity that seems to be a "good work" under the concept, "We do a lot of things for which we have no Bible authority." A conservative attitude makes a plea to have Bible authority (either generic or specific) for all we do - therefore refraining from involving the church in activities alien to that of the church in the New Testament.

Briefly, the walls of innovations which have divided us are built in three areas: WHO? Who is to do the work of the church? The church? Or a human institution? The church has a God-given work to do, and the Lord made the church sufficient to do its own work. Within the framework of elders and deacons, a local church is the only organization necessary to fulfill its mission of evangelism, edification, and benevolence (Eph. 3:10-11; 4:11-16; 1 Tim. 3:15). However, a wedge was driven when some began to reason that the church may build and maintain a separate institution - a different WHO to do the work of the church. This separate institution is human in origin and control. It is not a church nor governed by the church - yet it receives financial maintenance from the church. Human institutions so arranged (such as benevolent homes, hospitals, colleges or missionary societies) may be doing a good work. But when they become leeches on the church, they deny its independence and all-sufficiency and make a "fund-raising house" of God's church.

HOW? How is the work of the church to be overseen? On a local basis with separate, autonomous congregations? Or may several local churches work as a unit through a sponsoring eldership? The organization of the New Testament church was local in nature, with elders limited to oversight of the work of the flock among them (Acts 14:23; 1 Pet. 5:2; Acts 20:28). We are divided by those who promote "brotherhood works" through a plan of inter-congregational effort with centralized oversight - an unscriptural HOW.

WHAT? What is the mission of the church?

Spiritual, or also social? It is in this area that the loose attitude toward the Scriptures is becoming more apparent. Though wholesome activities are needed for all, the Lord died for a higher and holier mission than food, fun, and frolic. Let the church be free to spend its energy and resources in spiritual purposes (1 Pet. 2:5; Rom. 14:17) and let the home be busy in providing social needs (1 Cor. 11:22,34). ■

Controversy and Bitterness

Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

It seems to me that a trait of a generation ago has all but become lost to the present generation. That is the ability of brothers in Christ to engage in spirited controversy of religious issues without it turning into some degree of personal bitterness between the disputants.

During WWII, Foy E. Wallace, Jr. and John T. Lewis carried on what some considered to be a very heated and pointed exchange of articles on "the war question" in some papers for which they wrote. If you have read any of this exchange, you know that neither man "pulled any punches" in attacking the other's position.

Brother Granville Tyler told me of an instance that happened at a preacher get-together in Birmingham around that time. Brother Lewis was present. Someone mentioned to brother Lewis that brother Wallace's dad, Foy E., Sr., had died recently. Brother Lewis said that he was sorry to hear that and that he really thought a lot of him. A young man at the gathering, who had been reading the exchanges between brother Lewis and Foy, Jr., said to brother Lewis, "But, you don't think much of his son, do you?" Brother Lewis replied, "Young man, what do you think I am, a peanut? Foy Wallace, Jr. is one of the best preachers that I have ever heard, he just happens to be 'off' on the war question. That's all." ■

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore... Ephesians 6:13-14