

## A CHURCH THAT IS AUTONOMOUS

Roy H. Lanier, Sr.

- A, *New Testament churches were free from outside control.* **By church autonomy we mean the right of each group, or congregation, of God's people to determine its own belief and practice without interference or dictation from any outside source.** Synods, conferences, conventions, popes, and the like have no Biblical authority to interfere with the affairs of any congregation of God's people. **Each congregation is free under God to interpret the Bible for itself and to determine what its faith and practice will be.** These outside forces mentioned are not mentioned in the Bible; they have no authority for their existence and certainly none for their right to dictate the faith and practice of churches. **So one who is looking for God's church will pass by all those who are dominated by outside forces that insist on dictating and determining the faith and practices of the churches they control.**
- B, *All members are free to believe what they read.* No one should want to become a member of a church that reserves the right to determine what is to be believed about the teaching of the Bible. **Each one should be free to read and study the Bible, since all must account to God for what they think and how they live** (Romans 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10). If the church could account to God for you, it might have the right to determine what you believe; but since it cannot account for you in judgment, **it should allow you the right to read the Bible for yourself and decide what you will believe. Furthermore, you ought to have the right to read what you wish to read, to study the doctrines of other churches, and to compare them with what you read in your Bible. A church that denies its members the liberty to read or to hear the doctrines of other churches, that has a "forbidden list" of books that its members cannot read without being disciplined by the church, is a spiritual dictator and is not the church of our Lord.**
- C. *Each one must be free to practice what the Bible teaches.* No one should think of becoming a member of a church that refuses to allow its members to practice anything and everything that is taught in the covenant in force today. Many churches have written creeds that prescribe the work and worship of those churches, and from these creeds there can be no deviation. Even though the creed teaches something not found in the Bible, the individual must go along with the creed-driven church and its unscriptural practice. And if the Bible teaches something not contained in the creed, the individual member cannot enjoy the privilege of doing that thing because the creed-driven church will not include it in its order of work and worship. **So if you are planning to become a member of a church, you will do well to stay free from those that follow a creed instead of following the Bible as its rule of faith and practice.** (All Emp. Mine w.d.) (Gospel Preacher, Vol. 2, pp.13-14)

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