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A New God-Given Name

By Hugo McCord

"Israel," the complimentary name which God gave to Jacob and to his descendants (Genesis 32:28; 35:10; 1 Kings 18:31; 2 Kings 17:34), was to be replaced, said Isaiah (62:2, ASV), "by a new name which the mouth of Jehovah shall name."

Some have said that the "new name" was "Hephzibah" (Isaiah 62:4), but Hephzibah was not new, being the name of Manasseh's mother (2 Kings 21:1). Some have said that the "new name" was "Beulah" (Isaiah 62:4), but the word "beulah" was not new, having already been used by Isaiah (54:1, beulah, "married").

The only "new name" by which Jesus' disciples were called was "Christian" (Christianos, meaning "belonging to Christ." It fulfills the prediction of "a name better than of sons and daughters," of "an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off" (Isaiah 56:5).

Various names (not spelled with a capital letter) of Jesus' followers were "believers" (Acts 4:32; 5:14), "brothers" (Acts 9:30), saints (Acts 9:32), and "disciples" (Acts 6:2; 9:26). It is sad that Alexander Campbell exalted the word "disciples" into a proper name, "Disciples," thus making it the "new name" of Old Testament prophecy. His fellow restorationist and friend Barton W. Stone criticized Campbell for this error. But today Campbell's error remains in "The Disciples of Christ" denomination, a "sect founded by Thomas and Alexander Campbell" (*Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*, p. 321). Biblically the only name that came originally from "the mouth of Jehovah" (Isaiah 62:2), and in which Jesus' followers are commanded to "glorify God," is the name "Christian" (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16).

Sad it is for anybody not to know the origin of the name "Christian," but especially when some Bible scholars do not know. "Many denominational commentaries give the source of the name (Christian) as originating with the unbelievers or heathens in Antioch" (Conybeare and Howson, *The Life and*

Epistles of St. Paul, p. 100; David Stevens, *Therefore Stand*, February 1995, p. 13).

"Christian" is "the name given to the disciples by pagan gentiles at Antioch" (*A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, G. Abbott-Smith, 484). The name "Christian" was first given to the worshippers of Jesus by the Gentiles" (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Joseph Henry Thayer, 672). The name "Christian" was "coined by the pagan slang" of "the citizens of Antioch" (James Moffatt, *A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, I, 316).

No, the name "Christian" was not "coined by the pagan slang" of "the citizens of Antioch," but first came "from the mouth of Jehovah" (Isaiah 62:2). Unbelievers did not use the name "Christian" in their condemnation of Christianity, but they called Christians "the sect of the Nazarenes" (Acts 24:5), and by such a question as "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46).

Julian, an ex-Christian, was emperor of Rome 331-363 A.D., but he became such an adversary of Christianity that he ordered all citizens of the Roman Empire to stop calling Jesus' followers "Christians," and, instead, to belittle them by calling them "Galileans" (Robert Milligan, *The Scheme of Redemption*, 473). Truly "Julian the Apostate" (as he is known in history), was a leader among those of whom the inspired James had earlier written: "they blaspheme the honorable name by which you are called" (James 2:7).

In the New Testament the name "Christian" first appears in Acts 11:26, where the KJV and the ASV say "the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." But those translations do not tell who first called the disciples "Christians." This is because the translators of the KJV and the ASV overlooked the special meaning of *chrematizo*, overlooking the fact that Luke had not used *kaleo* or *phoneo*, meaning "call," but had used *chrematizo*, a word also meaning "call," but in the Bible always means a "divine call" (Jeremiah 25:30; 26:2; LXX 32:30; 37:2; Matthew 2:12, 22; Luke 2:26; Acts 10:22; 11:26; Romans 7:3; Hebrews 8:5; 11:7; 12:25), meaning "to give a divine command or admonition, to teach from heaven" (Thayer, 671). If Luke had used *kaleo* or *phoneo*, who did the calling could be anybody, on the earth or in heaven. However, since the inspired penman Luke used *chrematizo*, the

calling cannot be an earthly source, but has to be divine, and so is restricted to "the mouth Jehovah" (Isaiah 62:2).

This means that *echrematisan* (Greek manuscript D, aorist passive), "were called," refers to a divine calling, a teaching "from heaven" (Thayer, 671), and so the word "divinely" needs to be inserted in the KJV and the ASV translations of Acts 11:26: "the disciples were divinely called Christians first in Antioch." This was done in the FHV [*Freed-Hardeman Version*], first edition.

The NWT [*New World Translation*] of the Jehovah's Witnesses ("the worst of all translations," Guy Woods) in Acts 11:26 is superior to the KJV and the ASV: "the disciples were by divine providence called Christians," showing that the NWT translators recognized the special meaning of *chrematizo*. However, when the Jehovah's Witnesses come to my door, and are asked to follow their own translation in Acts 11:26, to call themselves "Christians," they refuse and go away.

Reference was made above to the Greek manuscript D in Acts 11:26, *echrematisan*, in the passive voice, "were called." However, it is most likely that the Greek manuscripts Aleph, A, B, C, with *chrematisai*, in the active voice, "called," is what Luke actually wrote. This would mean that Jehovah did the calling through the mouths of Paul and Barnabas, making Acts 11:25-26 to read:

Then he [Barnabas] went to Tarsus to look for Saul [Paul]. When he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came to pass, even for a whole year, they were gathered together with the congregation, and they taught a large multitude, and, first in Antioch, by a divine revelation, they called the disciples Christians (FHV, 4th edition).

As Moses and Jeremiah, each one, was "the mouthpiece of divine revelation" (Thayer, 671; Exodus 3:1-12; Jeremiah 26:2; Hebrews 8:5; 12:25), so were Paul and Barnabas the mouthpieces of a "divine revelation" predicted as "from the mouth of Jehovah" (Isaiah 62:2). Thus God used Paul, an apostle and a prophet "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Galatians 1:1; Acts 9:17; 13:1), and Barnabas, a prophet "full of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 11:24; 13:1), as his spokesmen to deliver first to the disciples at Antioch the "new name" (Isaiah 62:2) "Christian."

Greek students would be interested in the grammatical exegesis of Acts 11:26 by Melvin E. Elliott, 7671 W. Karen Lee Lane, Peoria, AZ 85382-38-38: de 'and' the transition from arriving at Antioch to the things that happened there; egeneto 'it happened' autois 'to them' (to whom?) dative plural, to Barnabas and Saul; to do what? 1) sunachthenai aorist infinitive passive 'to be gathered together' for an entire year in the church; 2) didazai aorist infinitive active 'to teach' a considerable crowd; 3) chrematisai aorist infinitive active 'to call.' 