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There is no one name of the faithful disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ used in scripture let alone outside of its inspired orbit. A name is a label of the accuracy of a label which correctly identifies the contents to the container to which it is attached is what is important. If a bottle contains poison but is labelled the elixir of life, it is very dangerous to drink the contents. Being able to trust the label is not only important but vital in some circumstances. Labelling a bottle “mum’s ginger beer” but if it is actually full of “dad’s ginger beer”, is an error but not a very significant one. When it comes to giving a name to the Truth holders, that only really matters if being able to identify the Truth holders for who they really are, actually matters.

For those who espouse the Biblical doctrine of there being but One Body (Ephesians 4v4) the issue of the use of names is deemed important. To those who have only a loose form of the understanding of association, where there is no divinely intended Body of believers to be identified and fellowshiped, names mean much less.

In our understanding families have names. All members of that family are identified because they share the same name. The divine family is no exception. In Ephesians 3v14,15 the head of that family is the Father. *“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.”* John 5v43 has *“I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not; if another come in his own name, him ye will receive.”* Here Jesus is teaching that if someone turns up and claims to be the Messiah they are more likely to be believed if they put out their own propaganda, rather than insist upon the narrow way and the strait gate which alone leads to life because the way of God’s name is too demanding.

In the Bible the believers were called Christians first in Antioch. Acts 11v26. Is Christian the Biblical name then to use for all

believers at any time? There are two other uses of Christian in scripture both are associated with their critics, Acts 26v28 *"Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persaudest me to be a Christian."* The use of Christian could be either positive, to reflect that the believers were disciples of Christ; or negative as a term of derision. In 1 Peter 4v16 *"Yet if any man suffer as a Christian let him not be ashamed."* Again, the context is of the persecution of believers by their adversaries, not believers confirming the faith of other believers. To emphasise the point the Apostle Paul never says, "We Christians" which would be a clear affirmation of the use of the name of believers by a believer. If the name Christian was intended to be the only name that should be used by the believers, then there would be an explicit statement to that affect, but there is none. Sadly the use of Christian today is claimed by many who are not followers of the biblical Christ, but they follow another Jesus, 2 Corinthians 11v4.

As the name Christian today does not identify those who follow Biblical Truth, so the label of Christian has become associated with any who claim the name of Jesus. Saying Jesus does not magically save you by mere annunciation. There is much more to it than that. The idea of Root-Christians or Original-Christians has much more appeal. The title Christian today needs to be qualified, and we should be careful when we use it.

The Bible makes it clear that there is a true religion and only one. It centres around the Lord Jesus Christ the only begotten Son of God. Acts 4v12 *"Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."* It is not a question of being a defender of faiths, but a defender of the one true faith. If a church sets itself up on the basis of non-biblical teachings, then despite using the name of Jesus, they are no followers of him. Also in John 14v6 *"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way the truth and the life no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."* There is an acceptable form of doctrine which was given to men which needs to be obeyed, and

there are other forms of doctrine which are non-biblical which we should avoid, Romans 6v17.

Being part of the family of Jesus requires application. If we wish to remain in that family after having been adopted then we need to do something, Matthew 12v50. God asks nothing from us which we are incapable of doing. To do otherwise would be not only perverse but very cruel, raising false expectations and damning us with the unrealisable hope of better things. God never behaves like that.

What other names or descriptions does the New Testament bring to the reader's attention?

Matthew 2v23	"He shall be called a Nazarene"	Meaning separate (from sin).
Acts 24v5	"Ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes ".	Sectarian.
Acts 28v22	The sect everywhere spoken against.	Unpopular choice.
1 Peter 2v17	"Love the brotherhood ".	Family bonds for all the group.
Revelation 21v9	The bride the lamb's wife"	Now betrothed future marriage
Luke 12v32	"Little flock "	Small size, numbers not important.

These speak of the whole community who collectively are the Ecclesia of Jesus at any given time, or to use another scriptural phrase, the One Body with Christ at the head and not another person in a position of sole authority.

When it speaks about ringleaders, in context, this is not God describing the believers but evil people pouring scorn on the Truth holders. This community is vilified by its opponents and often is dismissed as small and irrelevant by many, as they decry the size of Christ's little flock. Despite its size the One Body is catholic or universal in scope because it includes.

The various words used to describe the believers include the following:

Disciples	taught or trained	John 13v35	Only used in the gospels or Acts.
Friends	Beloved - philos	John 15v14	Familiar companions
Servants	Slave or bondman	Eph 6v6	Most widely used in NT books

Sealed	Impressed	2 Cor 1v22	Jesus also sealed
Heirs	Receives a portion	Heb 1v14	Only few uses
Children of God	Family	Rom 8v16	Also sons & daughters
The Elect	Chosen	Col 3v12	Only the faithful believers?
Brothers & Sisters	Family	Jam 2v15	Sister is only used rarely

In recent times the modern organic expression of the Truth has seen various names used within its lifespan, thus far we have seen the following adopted at various stages. They are in chronological order.

Royal Association of Believers	Coined by Dr John Thomas in 1850s. Only local.
Christadelphian	Coined by Dr John Thomas in 1860s. War issues.
Berean Christadelphian	To identify after a division. From a magazine. 1923
Ecclesia of Christ	To identify after a division. Dropped previous. 1933
Apostolic Fellowship	To identify after a division. Majority vote. 1971
Apostolic Ecclesia	To identify after a division. Majority vote. 1977

Other names have been adopted by those who have left the Truth but these are not included here, nor the myriad daughters of the harlot system whose names adorn the scarlet woman and the beast she rides. Revelation 18v2 warns us against the false.

The Ecclesia of Christ dropped the use of the name Christadelphian in 1933. The superficial argument was made against them that as they were all Christadelphians, they were all part of the brotherhood, so why divide. However they understood that the names of blasphemy cited in Revelation 17v3 meant that to be associated with a false name was condemnatory. Bearing the correct name is insufficient you must also live up to it, Revelation 3v1. There can be a congregation of hypocrites as Eliphaz correctly warned about in Job 15v34. The name Christadelphian in modern times had become associated with those who were not continuing on the legacy of the Pioneer Brethren.

Choosing a name can be difficult. It should not be done lightly nor changed because we are bored and wish to spice things up. If the Truth has been identified with a name before, then dropping that name needs to be done with much thought and care for the consequences. In a similar way to Christian, perhaps Original-Christadelphians might be used, however as the emergence of difficult fellowship issues has and will continue to emerge than merely referring back to the past is not the answer, as others will say that the Pioneers did not take that stance which confronting any modern apostacy has subsequently necessitated and will continue to do so.

To avoid using a name as some do means that your adversaries get to use ant name they like. To avoid being called Thomasites, Dr Thomas wisely saw the need to choose a label which he trusted was an accurate reflection of the true identity of the community of believers which he was providentially used to resurrect in these latter days.

If anyone has a more comprehensive list of New Testament names for the Truth holders, I would be interested to examine it. An interesting and unusual idea for a subject of a Bible class, thanks to which member it was who suggested this.

A Voice from the Altar

Russel Noonan